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punk planet

notes from underground

ISSUE #70 | NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER 2005 | \$4.95 US
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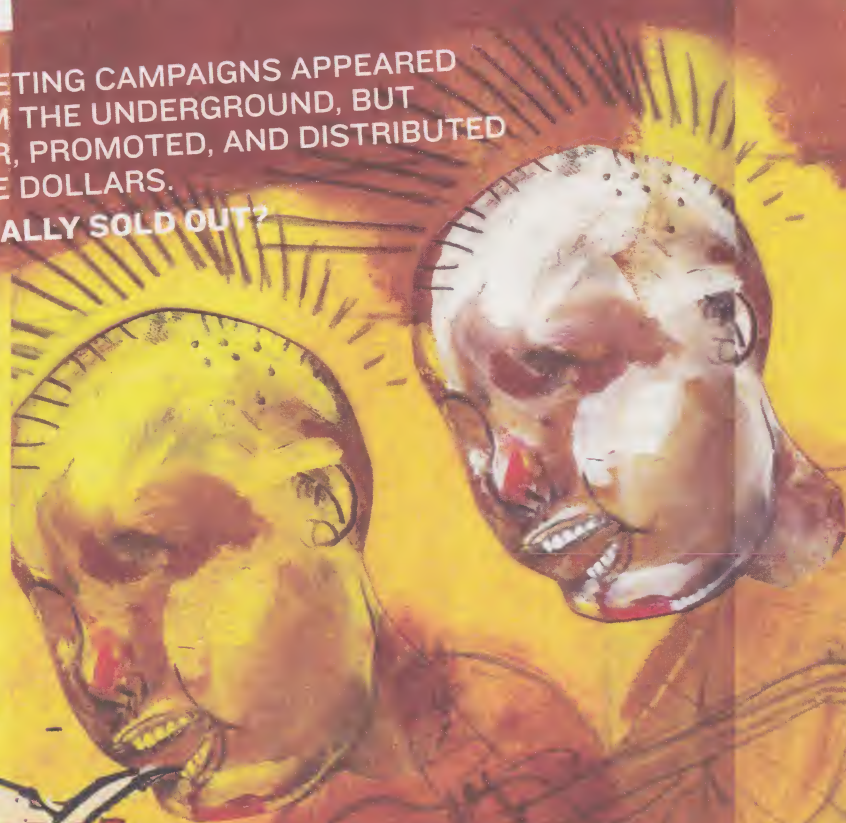
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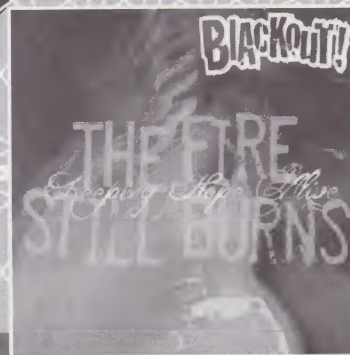


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PP70

"I KEEP A SKETCHBOOK OF IDEAS, THINGS THAT CATCH MY EYE. WHEN I'M DRIFTING OFF TO SLEEP, A LOT OF IDEAS COME FROM THAT MOMENT." —MARCEL DZAMA

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the risks

intro70

Things change. Sometimes they change for the better, sometimes for the worse. Over almost 12 years of publishing *Punk Planet*, the underground has changed dramatically. Repeatedly the scene has come upon crossroads and, good or bad, made a choice and continued on. We are at one of these crossroads now, and the provocative cover story, "Black Market," makes a compelling argument to choose the more difficult path: the one that doesn't come with a big paycheck at the end of it.

As *Punk Planet* managing editor Anne Elizabeth Moore explains in the story, the growing influence of indie-savvy marketers in the underground—as evidenced most recently in the Nike-inspired Minor Threat ripoff this summer—threatens to corrupt much of what has been built by independent-minded people like yourself. How we got to this point is a fascinating tale; how we choose where to go from here will forever change our scene.

This issue also marks one of the biggest changes in the history of our magazine: a complete revamping of our reviews section. One of the original reasons for founding *Punk Planet* was to offer a complete and diverse reviews section that truly represented the many sounds of the underground. While a noble cause, what that had turned into was a nearly 30 page review section containing almost 500 tiny reviews every issue. Unless you were look-

ing for a specific record, it was impossible to navigate and didn't lend itself to the magical discovery of new things that should come from reading reviews.

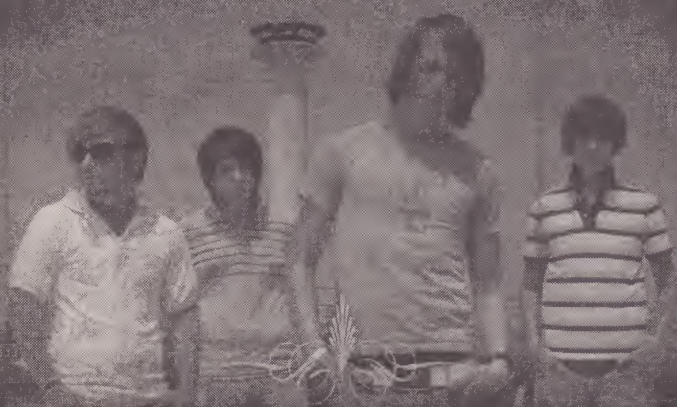
A great deal of thought was put into how to create a new reviews section that still offered a wide variety of sounds and ideas, while presenting them in a way that didn't overwhelm the novice and provided more information to the expert. I think our new section manages to do both and then some; I'd love to hear your thoughts.

Finally, as I write this introduction, New Orleans sits underneath millions of gallons of putrid, infested water. The storm that sunk the city hit just a week ago and we here at *Punk Planet* have watched from afar, speechless and angry and feeling unable to process the images and words that have come from the devastated region. There were many in the independent arts community from New Orleans and the surrounding area, and many more with family and friends down there. Our thoughts are with all of you.

As often proves true, the pace of a bi-monthly production schedule leaves us unable to address the tragedy fully in the magazine, but as we have closed out work on this issue, our thoughts have not been far from New Orleans.

Good luck,

DAN



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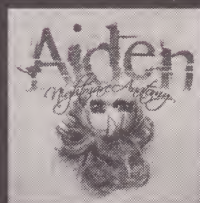
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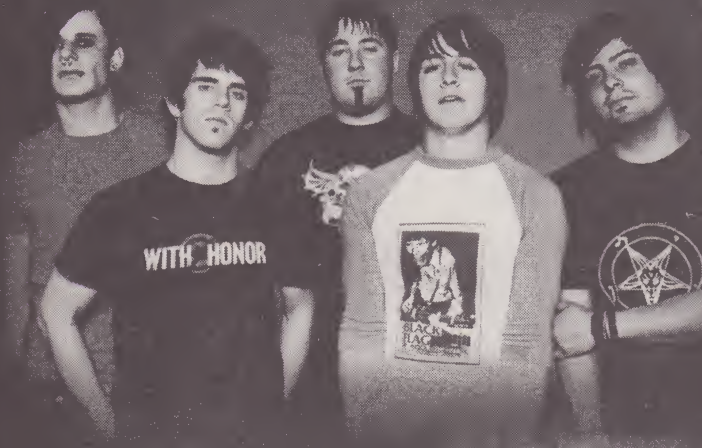
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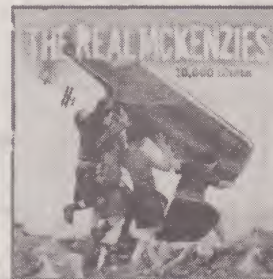
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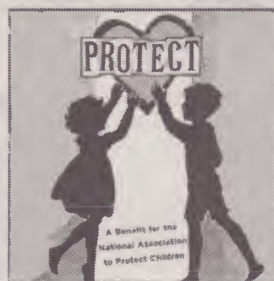
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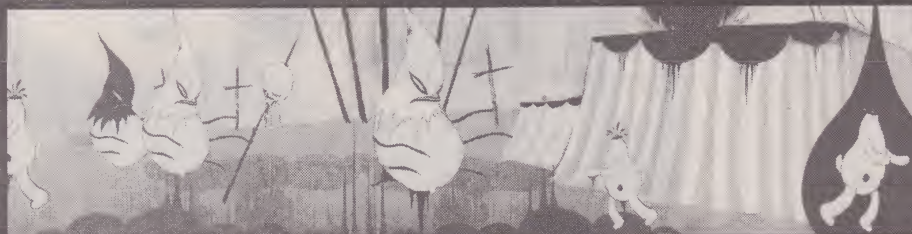
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For those of you still reeling in the wake of *Never Breathe What You Can't See*, here's some more! Further off the deep end and more Melvinoid this time, **Jello and the Melvins** serve up six more studio tracks (including a cover of Alice Cooper's "Halo of Flies"), remixes by Al Jourgensen, Dälek, and the Deaf Nephews, and to top it off: an all-new live version of the DKlassic "Kali-förnia Über Alles" - this time about the gubbernator, Schwarzenegger himself - and not a moment too soon! Featuring killer artwork by Camille Rose Garcia! Say it loud, say it proud - "Sieg Howdy!"

JELLO BIAFRA WITH THE MELVINS SIEG HOWDY!



REQUIEM

Seattle's Skarp have crafted a sonic suicide note that demands to be heard. The band's savage brand of grinding mayhem, known as "Blackout Grind" amongst true believers, will strike a chord with all fans of crust, grind, hardcore and the more virulent strains of metal.



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mail70

Helping Hurricane Relief independently

►Dear Punk Planet,

My friends from New Orleans are working hard to get donations and volunteers going toward more grassroots, community based organizations rather than FEMA (who channels their funds to Pat Robertson's org among others) or the big NGO's who may not actually take into account what the communities themselves want or need. Here are some great resources for giving money or volunteering in the relief and recovery efforts:

The Sparkplug Foundation has a great list of funding and volunteering options with organizations that doing grassroots relief work that focuses on people of color and poor people, especially groups that are run by, or accountable to people of color and economically devastated communities: www.sparkplugfoundation.org/katrinarelieff.html

Tides Foundation has a Rapid Response Disaster Relief

Fund that specializes in relief projects that serve those most in need and most forgotten or disenfranchised from traditional relief organizations: www.tidesfoundation.org/RR_0905.cfm

The League of Pissed Off Voters has a New Orleans Fund, of which 100% of the money donated goes to their work of building a team of media, organizing and advocacy-savvy New Orleans refugees who are ready to write op-eds, fight, advocate, support their displaced neighbors during this crisis, and work for New Orleans to be restored in a way that includes the input of ordinary people! secure.democracyinaction.org/dia/shop/indyvoter/custom.jsp?donate_page_KEY=80

MoveOn has a site where you can offer space for refugees to stay: www.hurricanehousing.org/

New Orleans Network: A way for people to connect with and support the New Orleans refugees in their area, and a way for New Orleans refugees to find

each other in their exile communities and organize to take back their city and make sure that it is rebuilt in ways that serve all New Orleans residents. Features exile community bulletin boards, discussion boards, resource listings, advocacy how-to sheets, events calendars, etc.: www.NewOrleansNetwork.org

Best,

Dara Greenwald

Are Q&As no good?

►Q: Why can't Punk Planet do a good story on Ian MacKaye?

A: Because the Q and A format is not a good form of story telling. Note that no magazine of journalistic repute use the Q+A format, except a one page, ironic and biting version in the New York Times Magazine. There is a reason for this: Q+A's don't tell a story, they show a conversation. PP Q+A's look more like a chance for the interviewer to show how quick on their toes they are rather than focusing on the subject.

Exhibit A is the inability

for PP over the last decade to write a piece on MacKaye that wasn't an argument. No one, outside of the tiny PP world, cares what PP writers have to say. On the other hand, MacKaye transcends the punk scene and deserves proper coverage. Since MacKaye's politics dictate an underground existence, it is thus PP's job to provide coverage. Especially considering he is one of the major reasons for PP's existence. Unfortunately, PP has failed to do so. In the Q+A format an interviewer's ego shares the limelight with the subject. MacKaye, for all he's achieved, deserves better. As a fan of MacKaye since the 80's, I want to follow one of my favorite artists. After all, I get to follow baseball, politics and so on. So, next time, instead of sending someone who is going to print MacKaye's one word answers and their paragraph length "I" filled questions, have a writer do an actual story. Please.

Ray Lemoine
New York

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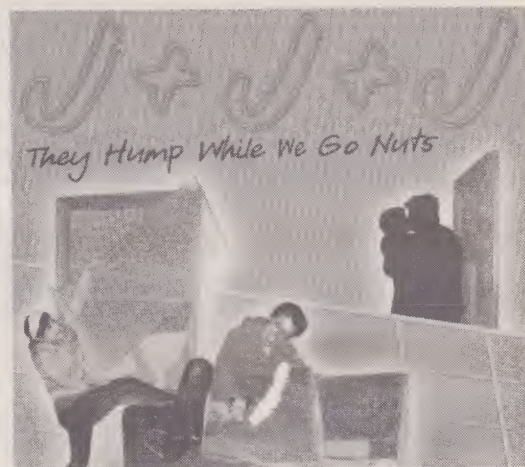
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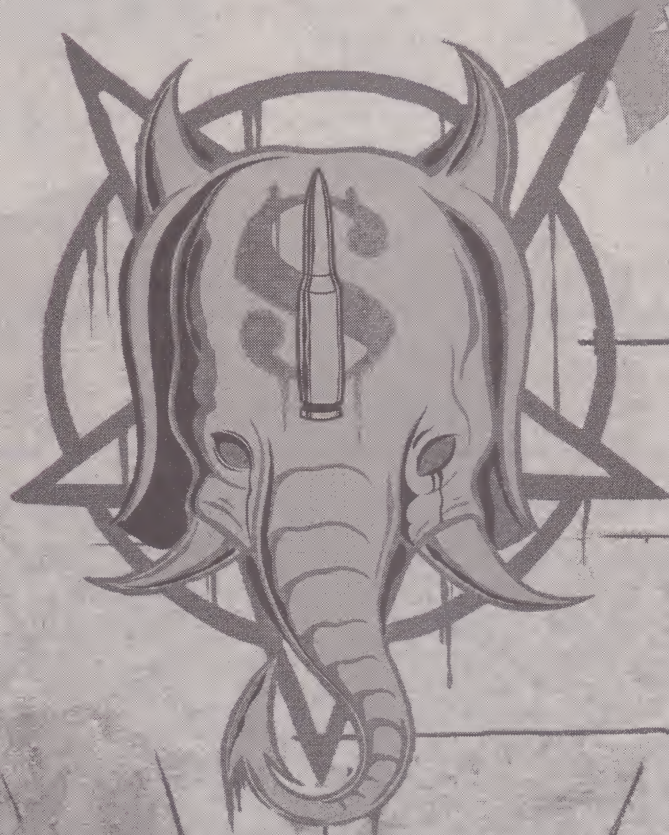
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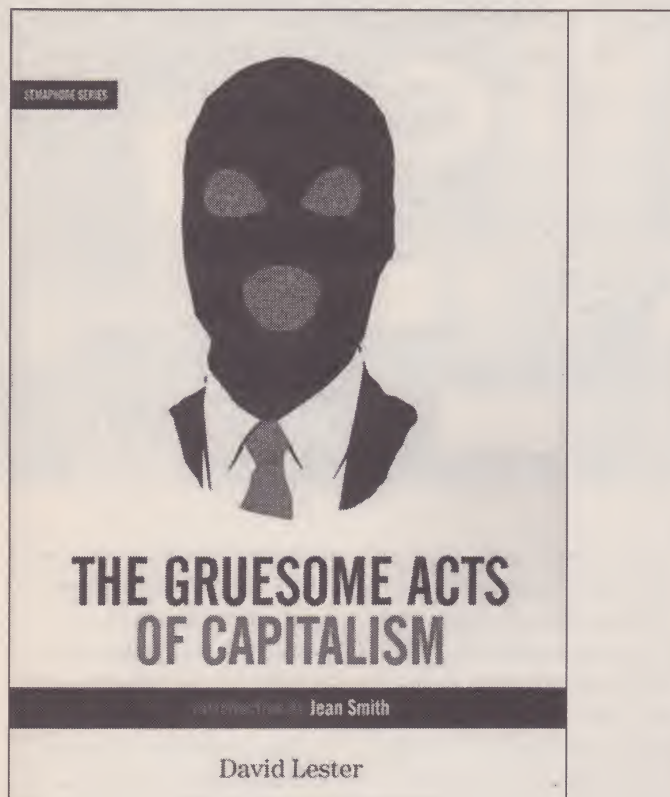
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"At times during my research I was overwhelmed by the sheer volume of the statistics and the sorrow they represented."

DAVID LESTER'S *THE GRUESOME ACTS OF CAPITALISM* LETS THE STATISTICS DO THE TALKING

Like it or not, numbers are our universal language. From early sea merchants' reliance on the abacus for international trade to our increasing dependence on binary code, human beings are easily manipulated by raw figures. *The Gruesome Acts of Capitalism*, a seemingly innocuous-sized book by David Lester (AK Press), is an uncanny index of the havoc to humanity and the environment caused by global economic inequality. Examples like *Percentage of the world's population who live without electricity*—40 demonstrate how wide the gap is between the developing and the industrialized world and how the harrowing consequences of that gap are now impacting everybody. Lester answered a few questions about how powerful simple numbers can be.

After compiling this book of hard, inscrutable numbers, what was the most upsetting statistic you discovered?

11 years, Lookout has continued to manage and sell the band's early recordings, 1989's *1,000 Hours* EP, 1990's *Slappy* EP, 1991's *1,039/Smoothed Out Slappy Hour*, and 1992's *Kerplunk*. Lookout Records publicist Tristin Laughter has described these releases as the label's foundation, noting it will take some serious restructuring for the label to get back on track.

Applegren assumed ownership of the label when Patrick Hynes and founder (and *Punk Planet* columnist) Larry Livermore retired in 1997. Shortly before Livermore's departure, the label had resolved a protracted battle over royalty payments with another one of its bands, Screeching Weasel.

Two years later, longtime employees Cathy Bauer and

Bratmobile drummer Molly Neuman became partners in the company. Since then, the label has released records from groups such as the Donnas, Mr. T Experience, Mary Timony, and Ted Leo and the Pharmacists.

"We wanted to make really good food that was really affordable."

BROOKLYN'S HABANA OUTPOST BRINGS A SUSTAINABLE APPROACH TO DINING

It is not often that getting drunk helps save the planet, but such is the case at Brooklyn's Habana Outpost, an environmentally sound restaurant-cum-bar where the only thing not recycled is the food.

Applegren says he is thinking of the future, though eager to resolve outstanding debts.

"I don't imagine we're going to come out of this unscathed, but I also want Lookout to be smarter and better as a result."—Mike McKee

ex-video store and on a concrete patio (hence, the seasonal aspect). It is here that owner Sean Meenan (owner of Manhattan's celeb-haunt Café Habana—the Outpost's big brother) has ditched the glitterati for a stake in New York City's first solar-powered restaurant.

"We're trying to make this project as environmentally sustainable as possible," says Atom (pronounced Adam) Cianfarani, Habana Outpost's green consultant, as well as a designer specializing in clothes fashioned from recycled bike inner tubes.

To whet: a sewing factory's bins now double as lime-green flower planters; food wastes are composted; cups and plates are created from biodegrad-

Habana Outpost is located on a quiet corner in tree-lined, brownstone Brooklyn, above an ever-rumbling subway. The seasonal business (May through Halloween) is set inside a brick-walled

Two statistics stand out. The first simply being that half of the world's population lives on two dollars a day. The second being that the amount of money Europeans spend on ice cream each year would be enough to ensure reproductive health for all women in developing countries each year. This absurd juxtaposition shows poverty in comprehensible western terms.

How do you go about translating these numbers into real-life action?

My book takes a distinctly un-academic look at the state of wealth and poverty in the world. By using this example of how money is spent on pet food vs. health care, I hope to clarify that poverty is not an insurmountable abstraction, but that it can be related to in real dollar terms. The most absurd thing then becomes why isn't anything being done to improve the lot of most of the world's population? At the back of the book I've included a list of organizations that are working to find the answers. Their very existence speaks more eloquently than I could about what might be possible to improve global suffering.

How did compiling these statistics change you personally?

At times during my research I was overwhelmed by the sheer volume of the statistics and the sorrow they represented. I ended up having four times the amount of information I actually used in the book. To avoid being too gloomy I balanced the information by adding creepy celebrity excess facts for levity, such as while half the world's population lives on two dollars a day, singer Lionel Richie's estranged wife Diane estimates that she spends \$50,000 a

month on personal expenses (nearly \$1,700 a day) and \$20,000 a year on plastic surgery (that's \$54 a day). But I was also inspired in my research when I discovered brave activists working and speaking out in dangerous situations. It reminds me of a quote by Mahatma Gandhi: "First they ignore you. Then they laugh at you. Then they fight you. Then you win."

Aren't the gruesome facts you detail in the book consequences of more complicated, complex relationships than simply the pursuit of capital?

Yes, global capitalism is only one part of the problem. It may not even be the worst problem faced by the world's poor, though it is symbolic of massive greed and exploitation. I view greed as the root of the web of financial, political, social, tribal, and religious dominance. Many of us in the world are entangled in this complex web that does go far beyond capitalism. But ultimately poverty and greed remain the unifying factors of why children become soldiers, neo-Nazis gain popularity, genocide and mass rapes occur and civil war erupts. The origin of these problems is usually the inequitable distribution of wealth. One group feels the other has more than they have. If wealth was evenly distributed you may not eliminate social strife but you would certainly lower the excesses of it and in the process improve and save the lives of millions of people. This would be a good thing, because in the end, all of us, no matter what our social status, would actually benefit. —Joe Meno

The Gruesome Acts of Capitalism is available from AK Press: www.akpress.org.

able plastics; the "kitchen" is a reclaimed postal truck rigged with a stove and burners; and, lastly, the patio features a solar array pumping electricity back onto NYC's grid.

"The solar cells could be powering your neighbor's fridge," Cianfarani says.

The restaurant's commitment to conservation and reuse also comes through in more clandestine ways. The main interior wall is covered with a reproduction of famed graffiti artist Lee Quinones' 1978 throw-up, "Howard the Duck," painted on a junior-high-school's handball court. As legend goes, the spray-paint masterpiece—featuring a befuddled duck—"shut down the school for several days because the graffiti was so amaz-

ing," Cianfarani says.

What's amazing about Habana Outpost is that its green-centric MO extends beyond theory and into a functioning reality. Who cares if the plates and cups are recyclable if the food is crud and the drinks are swill? Yet crowds flock nightly for frosty drafts of locally brewed Brooklyn Lager, homemade margaritas, and pocket-friendly Cuban eats like sweet plantains and crisp tortas. The most expensive dish on the menu—a steak sandwich—costs a still-reasonable \$9.

"We wanted to make really good food that was really affordable," Cianfarani says.

They have also made a gathering place for local artists. On the weekends, local

artists and up-and-coming designers overrun the Outpost's courtyard. Hungry locals grub on grilled ears of corn while perusing sushi-mat handbags, elegant imported frocks and silk-screened tees. It's a bit like a community-organized swap meet, complete with DJs spinning away the sunny afternoon. Once the sky darkens on Sunday night, however, the courtyard becomes an al fresco movie theater (featuring flicks such as *The Warriors*).

All well and good, yes, but Meenan and Cianfarani's mission extends beyond cheap grub and community building. They want to educate future generations about sustainability's finer aspects. To that end, the weekends fea-

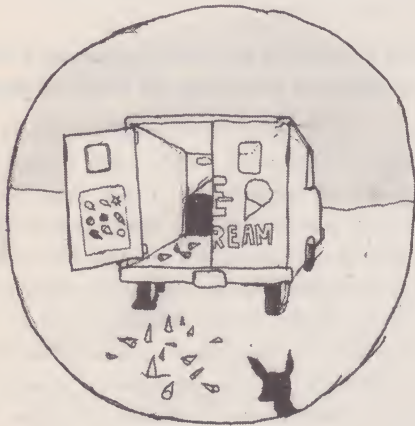
ture a kids' corner where free face-painting mingles with rotating events like solar-education classes.

However, let's not kid ourselves that Habana Outpost is a green-friendly Chuck E Cheese. Once the sun sets, the families disappear and the crowd becomes a convivial cross-section of the neighborhood's 20-something crowd—Caucasian, Asian, African-American, etc.—sitting around until the hour grows late, Nina Simone and conversation fluttering in the air, each beer making the world a better place. Or, each beer deluding you into thinking you're making the world a better place.

Either way, it's a win-win proposition. —Joshua M. Bernstein

Iceberg Town BY JOE MENO AND NICK BUTCHER

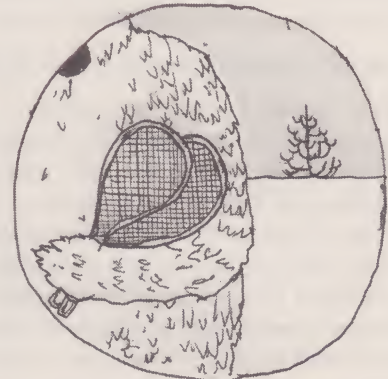
"After the sad results of the most recent election, many of us fled north. But the great continent could not bear the immense strain; a noticeable yet glacier-sized city drifted off into the ocean and the small strange world of Iceberg town was born then.



We found an abandoned ice cream truck and decided to make it into a portable record store. It was only spot and me.



I had only brought one crate of records with me when I escaped to the north; sadly, the crate was mostly new wave.



Two polar bears bought a Blondie record and an abominable snowman traded me a New Order for a pair of snow shoes.

"Shirtless, raging, grinning, blissed out, hollering, dancing without propriety, rolling around in ecstasy with a lust for every moment like a puppy dog in a leaf pile."

STEVE ALBINI REMEMBERS THE LIFE OF SILKWORM DRUMMER MICHAEL DAHLQUIST

The Chicago musical community lost three great men on Thursday, July 14, 2005. Michael Dahlquist, John Glick, and Doug Meis were killed at an intersection in Skokie while on their lunch break from their day jobs. The outpouring of emotion from their friends and peers in the last few days is testament to what terrific guys they were. One of them,

Dahlquist, was like a brother to me, as he was to a lot of people, and I wanted to say something publicly about him.

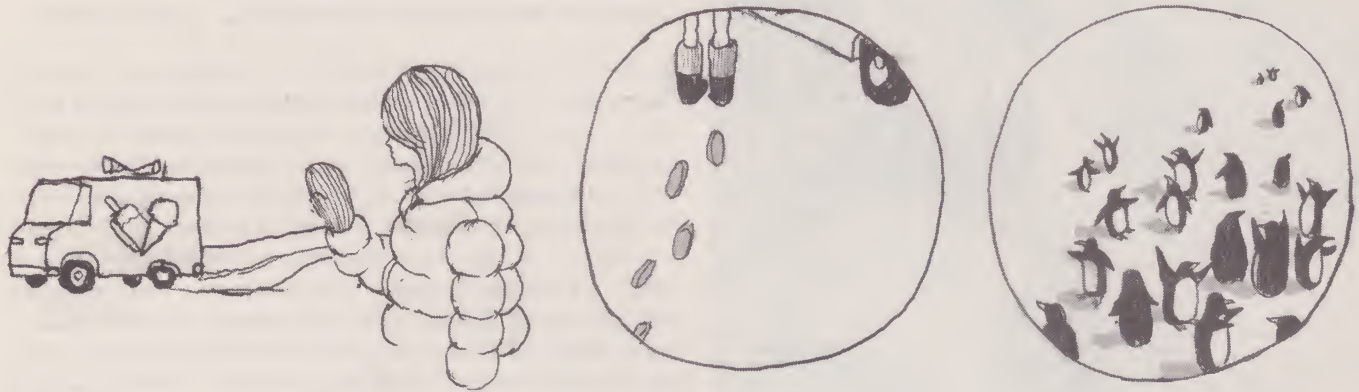
When I think of Michael Dahlquist, two images spring to mind. First, I imagine him drumming; he was a fantastic drummer. He played drums for Silkworm, a great band, and he played with titanic gusto. Arms swinging high overhead,

knees hopping up to his chin, he played like he was trying to break the damn things. Next, I imagine him dancing, because he danced big, and he would do it anywhere. He danced like he played the drums, with a recklessness bounded not by modesty, but by concern for other people's furniture.

And his drums were huge. His special drum kit was a giant Slingerland from the swing era with a bass drum the size of a wagon wheel. He kept it in a pristine state of dilapidation, just as he found it, and this was his genius. His drums often resided at the studio where I work, and countless other drummers, intrigued by their immensity, would sit behind them and try to play them. Some famous, some greatly skilled, some merely curious,

these pretenders all fell short. Like a demanding lover, this Stonehenge of drums would not yield to just anyone, but required the touch, the experience of her true mate to respond with affection. These drums sounded like shit when played by anyone other than Michael. But Michael was an artist on them. He belonged to these drums in the same way they belonged to him. Michael made half a dozen of Silkworm's albums on them, and he sounded like thunder.

Michael Dahlquist was a big, beautiful guy. Tall and fit, everything about him was large. Huge hands, giant smile full of big teeth, riotous laugh, bold, friendly voice (bolder and friendlier if he'd had a couple or if you were a cute girl), and enormous heart. He



We drove past Elise twice and she waved at us both times: she was wearing leg warmers and the leg warmers made her legs look nice.

She came up and asked if she could go for a ride in the record store: I wanted to say no but I didn't because I like her and I'm pretty sure she is the only girl in town.

We hooked up the ice cream truck to play "For Whom the Bell Tolls" and really scared some penguins. That was all.

wore his enormous heart on his sleeve—no, not on his sleeve, he was shirtless often enough. Sometimes pantless. He wore his heart *instead* of sleeves, like a frock coat. With the wrong sort of person—with a needy or petulant person, or someone who wants you to mark his every mood swing and spend your energy helping him get over them—such a thing can be a drag. That's not what I mean. Michael had no swing in his mood. Michael was continuously aglow.

I'm going to try to explain something specific about Michael, so bear with me, because unless you've experienced it you might think I'm being coy here. Michael enjoyed literally everything that ever happened to him. Everything was a marvel to him—a moment of

discovery, of novelty and insight to be celebrated with an openmouthed laugh. I mean everything. The best coffee, the shittiest gig, the cutest waitress, the worst hangover, the most awesome video store, the worst unrequited crush—all of it was worth discovering, laughing about, and genuinely reveling in. An unremarkable afternoon was worth reveling in because it was the most unremarkable afternoon, ever.

I am in a band, and my band played many shows with Silkworm. On a tour of western Canada (worst coffee ever) we witnessed the birth of a forest fire (most amazing natural disaster ever) from the parking lot of a hamburger stand that didn't offer ice for its drinks (worst concession ever). Later, in Winnipeg, after both bands

had played (most inappropriate crowd behavior ever), Michael disappeared with some filly (best crazy broad ever) and spent the night dancing at an impromptu speakeasy in a neighborhood apartment building. He returned while it was still dark to our flop-house accommodations (most tragic hotel ever), and shortly we all discovered that someone had set a dozen Dumpsters behind the hotel on fire, and that we might all be burned to death. That didn't happen, so it was the best weird day on tour ever.

Michael died in the company of friends, Doug Meis and John Glick, and they died with him. I'm sad to say I didn't know them well, because I know they were the best guys ever. The people who loved them say

so, and because they were there with Michael, I know it's true. How they died is unimportant. Tragic and stupid (they died because someone else's death wish involved crashing her car into theirs), but unimportant. How Michael lived is what I want to remember: shirtless, raging, grinning, blissed out, hollering, dancing without propriety, rolling around in ecstasy with a lust for every moment like a puppy dog in a leaf pile.

Michael, I know you aren't here to read this, but I'm saying it so I can tell everyone else, on the chance that you already knew it: I love you like a brother, and I wish I could be as embroiled in the moment (for one moment even) as thoroughly as you were every day you were alive. Requiescat in pace, Mikey. —Steve Albini



"I like working within really tight parameters."

ARTIST LEELA CORMAN MOVES FROM THE STORYTELLING OF GRAPHIC NOVELS TO THE "PROBLEM SOLVING" OF COMMERCIAL ILLUSTRATION

Leela Corman's drawing style is deceptive. At first glance, her comics appear to be drawn with an elegant economy of line that offers little in the way of nuance. But her quiet panels can capture the essence of an entire relationship, like the one in her 2002 graphic novel *Subway Stories*—somehow the impassive expressions on her characters' faces perfectly capture the awkwardness and uncertainty of adolescent longing.

Corman first came to prominence as a cartoonist when she was awarded a 1999 Xeric Foundation Grant for her work on her first graphic novel *Queen's Day*. *Subway Stories* was published three years later and was followed in 2004 by an appearance in the highly respected comics anthology *Scheherazade*. Though she is currently in the early planning stages of another graphic novel tentatively called *The Lucky One and the Smart One*, she finds comics are a secondary passion to illustration. For now, fans of Corman's calligraphic renderings must content themselves with occasional glimpses of her commercial illustration work in publications as diverse as the *New York Times* and *Bust*.

"I couldn't get my yearly exam in time before they ran out."

TO AVOID RISKING PREGNANCY, WOMEN ARE BUYING CONTRACEPTIVES ON CRAIGSLIST—FROM OTHER WOMEN

One woman needs drugs. She doesn't know where else to turn, since she doesn't have a prescription and can't afford a doctor's visit, so she turns to Craigslist, an online community set up like a huge classified ad. She enters the sale/wanted section to see if anyone is trying to sell what she needs, or posts an ad letting people know what she's looking for. When she finds a supplier, they contact her via an anonymous e-mail address set up by the Craigslist community. If she thinks the source is reputable, they exchange first names and ar-

range for delivery. They will meet face to face or conduct business by mail. After the transaction, the parties never speak again, or may keep in contact for the next time a supply is needed.

The length these young women go to obtain birth control makes them seem like junkies looking for a fix, instead of women protecting themselves from unwanted pregnancy. Yet since birth control is a prescription medication, in the eyes of the law these women are criminals. The women delivering the pills aren't licensed to sell and

the women buying are getting them from an unauthorized dealer without a prescription. According to attorney Diane Jorstad, all of them are subject to federal prosecution under the Controlled Substances Act. Buyers could spend up to a year in prison and pay a minimum \$1000 fine. Sellers face fines of no more than \$25,000 as well as possible further prosecution under state law.

At one end of the illegal transaction are the women who supply the drug. Ortho-Tricyclen, one of the most widely sold and sought pills on the website, is often sold for \$15 for a one-month supply. The same prescription from the pharmacy costs about \$80.

One reason birth control is sold cheaply on Craigslist is because women are often just trying to make some of their original investment back.

A 24-year-old from Wantagh, NY, says, "I was in a long-term relationship and finished my first years' prescription, which I received for free in California, so I bought a second, full-year prescription from Planned Parenthood in Colorado. About four months into the supply, my boyfriend and I separated. I wanted to make some, if not all, of my money back."

Other times a doctor will switch a prescription because of side effects, and once again the lady has leftovers. One 23-year-old from Chicago makes frequent trips to her gynecologist for her own prescription. While she's there, her doctor stocks her up on sample products, while also writing her out a prescription. Then she sells the pills from her doctor to young women, some of whom are repeat customers.

Has the fact that both you and your husband work in comics influenced each other's approach to the medium?

Quite a bit. My husband, Tom Hart, is a professor and he teaches cartooning, so he's really good at breaking down the critique. When you share a studio with someone, it changes things. A lot of it is really purely technical—just helping each other reason out compositions.

So are comics becoming more of an occasional outlet?

Let's call it an old love that's become a good friend. I used to be very into it, and now I'm just not as into it. But it is still a way that I like to tell a story sometimes. Basically if I have a story, I would want to tell it in comics form because I don't like to just write in words. I actually don't find drawing comics to be that much fun either. I don't have the same devotion to it that I did when I was in my early 20s and didn't need to make a living because I was in college.

Is part of that waning interest just a result of the difficulty of trying to make a decent living?

No, I wouldn't say that. It's that illustration happens to be something that I really like. I like the problem solving that goes along with it. I like working within really tight parameters. And I like those parameters to be pictorial and not narrative.

At the other end of the crime are buyers. Some of them, like one 23-year-old from New York City, are prescribed the pill but for one reason or another can't make it into a doctor's clinic to renew the prescription before it runs out. She calls it a lack of planning. "I hadn't gotten around to finding a new ob-gyn doctor since moving to NYC, and found myself with only one pack of birth control left. I couldn't get my yearly exam in time before they ran out . . . I simply needed them. I have been on birth control for over seven years."

The majority of women who buy pills on Craigslist, however, do so to save money. Even with insurance, the pills cost more at a pharmacy than through these dealers. One 22-year-old from San Francisco says, "My co-payment is \$10

. . . for generics! Not to mention the huge hassle of refilling the prescription."

A group of sisters from Chicago chip in on whatever pills they acquire. One of them, a 23-year-old office/marketing assistant, is provided insurance through her employer. Her sister is a 25-year-old interactive designer for a small boutique that can't afford to provide her with insurance. The two of them split the cost of the birth control they buy, but when they get it through a pharmacy, it still costs \$30.

While there is always the legal dilemma of selling or buying prescription medications without authorization, these women are at least avoiding the dilemma of finding another way to protect themselves. As the 25-year-old interactive designer from Chicago put it, "I think there should be more

What is your latest comics project?

It's a story set in the Lower East Side at the turn of the last century concerning twin sisters growing up in a tenement. One becomes the neighborhood abortionist, and the other becomes a vaudeville star/mantrap. Along the way, you'll get catty self-obsessed theater bitches, a hair-raising escape from Czarist Russia, a brief Romanian interlude, an affair with a Polish farm girl, many unwanted pregnancies, a lot of foundation garments, a fit thrown in Central Park, and an awful lot of Yiddish cursing.

What inspired this type of narrative?

I have many reasons for writing this story, most of them not at all political, but one of my reasons is political: the arguments about reproductive choice in this country are conducted in terms that never address the consequences, for women and for society at large, of not having a choice. Not having a choice, to me, means women hemorrhaging to death in hallways. Period. Of course this is only one aspect of my story, but it is very important to me, and the more I hear public figures who will never have to face an unwanted pregnancy in their lives talk about this issue as if they have any right to talk about it publicly, the more I feel I need to make this stark statement in my work. —Ari Charney

Leela Corman also belly dances: www.glittercannon.com.

economical solutions for contraceptive coverage for young adults."

Given the lack of affordable healthcare and the wid-

ening Internet marketplace, a new wave of young women are choosing to try their luck online instead of between the sheets. —Shawna Flavell

"It's just one of those formats that will not die."

METAL LABEL EMETIC RECORDS AND OWNER STEVE RARICK ARE KEEPING VINYL ALIVE FROM FLINT, MICHIGAN

Though many have foreseen the future of the vinyl LP as being the same as the 8-track and that rapidly fading cassette, labels like Flint, Michigan's Emetic Records have been keeping the analog tradition alive and well by making use of vinyl's newest popular trend: the reissue. Started as a distro in 1998 by frustrated college student Steve Rarick, metal label

Emetic was more a means to an end.

"None of the stores in my area were carrying the music I was into, and if they were it was usually \$29.99. At the time, I was really into collecting import vinyl, and what better way to support your habit than to get things at wholesale prices?" Rarick asks.

In 2000, Emetic finally made the jump from carrying

GALLERY: Someone Tell Mayor Daley, the Pirates are Coming

ART BY DEB SOKOLOW



other people's music to releasing their own. Both the Exploding Zombies *Several Severed Heads* and H8 Inc.'s *Fraternal Order of Felons* sold out, though issued only on CD. The first vinyl release was Ghoul's *We Came for the Dead*, which eventually sold out its run of a clever 666 copies.

Emetic is also fighting the good fight when it comes to reissuing records. So far, most of the records Rarick has put out sport copyright dates of less than 10 years ago, fitting snugly in-between when most things stopped coming out on vinyl and only appeared in stores on CD. But the question remains: why vinyl, anyway?

"I just love the overall packaging. It's just one of those formats that will not die. The industry tried killing it in

the early '90s, but the indie and underground labels kept it alive. Now, the industry is bringing it back."

Although metal labels have always gravitated towards the inferior-sounding picture disc for as long as the genre has existed, Rarick has only done a few such records. Most have a limited colored vinyl version with the remainder on black. Full-color sleeves and quality vinyl are but two of the ingredients that make Emetic a dream come true for metal-heads who love their vinyl.

Rarick continues, "Of course downloading hurts, but that's just a sign of the times. No matter what format it is, people will still want the real packaging."

Amen. —Dave Hofer

Keep vinyl alive: www.emeticrecords.com.

"It is important to provide an opportunity to journalists who cannot afford to work for free."

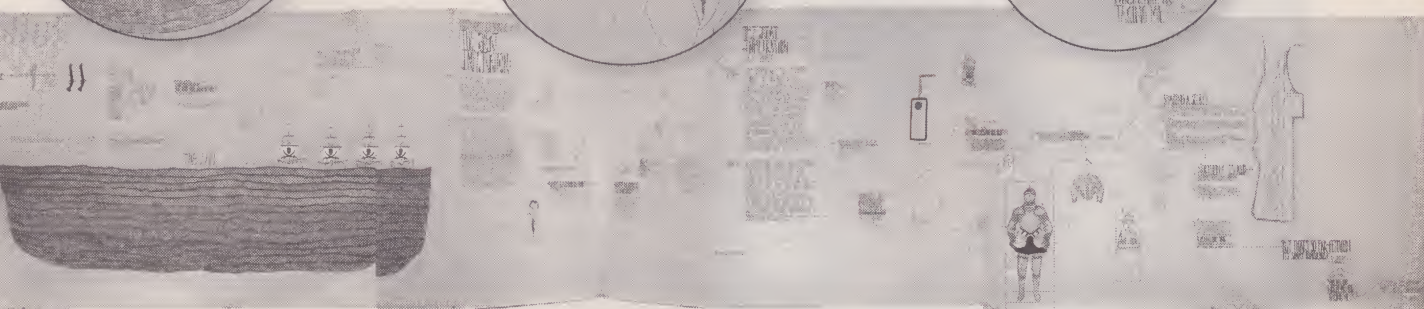
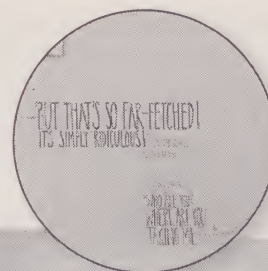
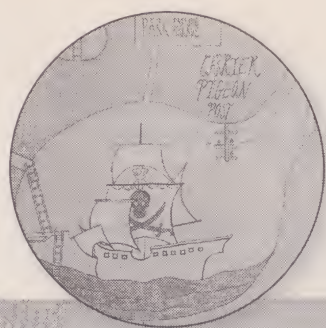
THE NEWSTANDARD WANTS TO CHANGE JOURNALISM—BY COMPENSATING THOSE WHO DO IT

In January of 2004 former ZNet commentators Jessica Azulay and Brian Dominick launched *The NewStandard*, an e-newspaper that is the first project of their non-profit PeoplesNetWorks. *The NewStandard* (TNS) is an anomaly in the alternative news landscape because it focuses on hard daily news and—gasp!—its writers are actually well compensated for their hard work. The Syracuse, NY-based publication prides itself on journalistic and fiscal integrity: Rare corrections are displayed prominently on the site not to

shame writers, but to demonstrate their commitment to accuracy for TNS readers. The publication is entirely reader-funded, and accepts no ads, or government or foundation funding. Jessica Azulay about how TNS sets a new standard for progressive journalism and the business of independent publishing.

How did TNS start?

Co-founder Brian Dominick and I were both interested in media and in building alternative, sustainable institu-



Sokolow's large-scale drawings feature the obsessive thoughts of a paranoid narrator. Combining her interest in pirates and the legacies of the two Mayor Daleys in recent Chicago history, her images also reference contemporary fears of terrorist attacks on metropolitan areas.

Photographs by David Ettinger.

tions that reflect revolutionary values. We were interested in branching out and reaching beyond the "choir" to an audience that didn't already agree with what we had to say. We decided that the hard-news format, instead of commentary, was one way of appealing to that audience. Once we had our founding principles and our goals for the type of media we wanted to publish, it was just a matter of working our asses off to make it happen.

What are the limitations of publishing online?

The most obvious limitation is audience. We can only reach people who have Internet access. However, given the cost-effectiveness of the medium, we are able to reach dramatically more people than we

could ever reach with print. This, of course, does not address the issues of who has access to the Internet and thus, access to our publication. Since we see that audience as crucial, we are currently working on plans to move into print as soon as we can. ¶ Another limitation is that most people equate Internet with free, which makes it really hard to fundraise for our publication. It's very hard to make people grasp how labor-intensive our news really is.

Why do you make it a priority to pay your writers well?

It is important to provide an opportunity to journalists who cannot afford to work for free. This helps us eliminate one of the barriers to having a diverse group of writers and voices at

TNS. Another reason we pay is because we are a daily news organization and we need reliable, consistent content. We need our journalists to meet deadlines with quality work. It's hard to obtain that when people work on a volunteer basis. It doesn't sit well with me that our society pays people who run horrible, life-depleting corporations, but does not provide livelihood to people who work for social change and provide a valuable service to the public. We're trying to change that by insisting that our work is worthy of financial support. In our ideal society, public interest journalists would make a decent living because their work is important to the public.

What do you see as *TNS's* niche?

The thing that makes us different is our exclusive focus on hard-news reporting. Our target audience is made up of people who like to read news because they want to know what's going on in the world but don't want to be preached at from an ideological standpoint or told how or what to think. We imagine ourselves writing for the critical thinkers out there who are disenchanted with the so-called "mainstream" media but who do not necessarily consider themselves "leftists" or "activists." ¶ The next challenge for our nonprofit organization, PeoplesNetWorks, is to provide ways that people can then take that information and act on it.

—Emily Udell

Read all about it: Newstandardnews.net.



"Folks could stumble onto the catalog in the future and then 'get it.'"

MIDWESTERN-BASED MARLBORO CHORUS FINDS HIS VOICE IN PERSONAL, IF NOT MAINSTREAM, SUCCESS

"I keep creating music because I honestly cannot stop," Pat Stolley tells me, in describing his itch for music. Ever since he figured out the bass-line to U2's "New Year's Day" as a 12-year-old, Stolley (aka B. Patric) has had a need to create his unique brand of glistening rock on a constant basis, all the while growing into one of the dedicated, and overlooked, songwriters in the Midwest.

Although Stolley's past musical projects (Otis, Multiple Cat) achieved some degree of notoriety, he has always stuck to his uncompromised artistic vision, which has found the Quad Cities native at odds with the powers that be in both the underground and mainstream music industries. A husband and parent, Stolley runs his own painting company, actively records other Midwestern musicians at his own assembled studio and his current musical project—the Marlboro Chorus—finds him reaching the zenith of his creative powers.

As he hits his mid-30s, Stolley continues to push his art toward fresh horizons. Drawing from a variety of experiential influences, the Marlboro

The Pie Report

Now, I don't want to get all retro-political on you pie fans, but the more I learn about Calvin Coolidge, the more perfect it seems that his favorite pie was a plain egg custard. Stoic, safe, refined, yet completely unwilling to take risks—what more fitting pie for a man whose legacy is defined by quotes such as "If you don't say anything, you won't be called on to repeat it." Enjoy!

Calvin Coolidge's Custard Pie.

9" unbaked pie shell
2 eggs
¾ C sugar
1 heaping Tb flour
½ tsp salt
3 C boiling milk
Nutmeg, to taste

Beat eggs. Add sugar, flour, and salt—mix well. Stir in hot milk. Pour into pie shell. Sprinkle with nutmeg. Bake @ 400° F for 15 minutes then reduce heat to 325° F, and bake 15 more minutes or until knife inserted near center comes out clean.

—Sue Anne Zollinger www.pieofthemonth.org



"Let's wear leather jackets."

WYOMING'S TEENAGE BOTTLEROCKET BRINGS POP PUNK TO THE EMO-SATURATED MASSES

No one is ever actually from Wyoming. It's an imaginary place, a myth, something you only read about in high-school geography books. Then I met Ray Carlisle, the bassist and self-described co-lead singer for the pop-punk outfit Teenage Bottlerocket (TBR) at a Bottom Lounge show in Chicago, and suddenly Wyoming became real. All four of the current band members, Joel Pattinson, Kody Templeman, and brothers Brandon and Ray Carlisle hail from the town of Laramie, home of the University of Wyoming. Now, two years after *Another Way*, their first independent release on their self-made label, One Legged Pup Records, the boys of TBR are touring it up with the Groovie Ghoulies and the Teen-

age Harlots promoting their new record, *Total*, out on Red Scare Records. With its simple three chord progressions and clever lyrics, TBR is Ramones-core at its best. It's a sound that has us pop-punk supporters lending our depraved ears to the revitalization of the genre. I had a chance to chat with Ray via cell phone, while they were en route to a San Diego show.

Tell me a little bit about the background of the band.

Brandon and I used to play in a band called Homeless Wonders and we released a couple CDs on a record label out of Denver called Suburban Home. We got into punk

Chorus is a glistening mixture of bittersweet pop, catchy, shimmering harmonies, and solidly crafted musicianship that coalesce into a blissful listening experience—*Youth Medium* (Future Appletree Records), the band's most recent album, is a prime example.

What has kept you motivated to keep playing for over two decades without achieving mainstream "success"?

"Success" in terms of the market may have eluded me, but I feel a personal success for sure. I feel good about the work I've done, and the fact that it's obscure is almost better in some ways. I feel like folks could stumble onto the catalog in the future and then "get it." I want to make the records I want to when I want to and put them out when I want to and to not tour and all that, and if that means no one ever hears them, then I accept that. It's my choice.

How has fatherhood changed your outlook as an artist?

Well, not a lot. I have friends who have kids and they think of themselves as parents first. In my opinion, this is making a generation of over-indulged future helpless Americans. You can't stop your life when you have kids. You owe it to them to fulfill yourself first so you can be a happy parent and a model. I'm sad when I think of people I know who devote their entire existence to their kids. They'll be gone in 18 years, most likely trying to get away

music sometime around 1994 and then the bass player left Homeless Wonders and we started TBR. Homeless Wonders started to get so overindulgent like Fugazi. And me and Brandon were looking at each other towards the end of the band's existence going "what is this, we don't like this type of music." So we started TBR with certain rules in mind. Like, let's wear leather jackets [Laughs.] *Another Way* and the *A-Bomb 7"* are basically the most stripped-down, rock-and-roll type songs you could ever record as far as punk-rock music is concerned.

How do you guys deal with criticism, whether it's positive or negative, constructive or not?

Releasing *Another Way* and the *A-Bomb 7"* out of my bedroom you don't really have to deal with

criticism much because nobody knows about your band. So we sold a couple hundred copies of both, and then *Total* comes out on this big label and we sold 2,000 copies in two months. Obviously pop-punk bands that have been doing it longer than us get jealous and talk shit about us on message boards. And I'm new at all this stuff, so I'm not gonna lie. When I read stuff that bashes my vocals or band, it hurts my feelings. But we were playing with Chixdiggit at that show in New York City and KJ [Jansen] set me aside and said "Listen Ray, you're gonna have to learn how to take this criticism." But I guess if you're gonna experience any kind of success with your music you're gonna have to learn how to put your bulletproof vest on.

from their suffocating parents. In the future, I'd like to play music with my kids. I hope my son is a drummer. That would be handy as hell. [Laughs.] He's a really good musician already; he has an excellent voice and an intuitive musical sense. He hears harmony and perceives quite a bit about music, not just the surface of it, but the meanings and connotations of the lyrics and sonic texture.

Your music hits on a variety of emotions and it truly strikes feelings of happiness, yet also gloom. What fuels the tenor of the sounds that you create?

Life in general. Life is a mix of good and bad. I'm always fascinated by people making "bad" choices like having affairs, hating their job, being depressed and not knowing why—not making changes in their lives when they should or could. The stoic American mindset, this sort of, *work, work, get stuff, keep moving up, don't mind the nagging thoughts in the back of your mind* . . . forget all about the feelings you had when you first met your wife, or when you spent a million summer days in little league playing centerfield. But there's good with that: the rush of infidelity, the high part of manic depression, the heritage of work. I've made bad choices, and made amends through songs. It's sort of an esoteric therapy. It's sort of the bittersweet approach. That's my favorite feeling . . . like something that you love that you'll never do again. —Brian Peterson

Find the Marlboro Chorus online at: www.futureappletree.com.

What's the biggest thing you've learned on this tour?

When you're on the road for 35 days there's going to be ups and downs. It's nice just to embrace the moment and have fun where you're at.

What do you guys do when you're not touring?

Actually, for the entire month of June I was in Brazil working offshore on an oilrig in the Atlantic Ocean. We do tests on the oil wells for residual oil concentration. What we do is inject a bunch of chemicals into an oil well and then we let them sit for five to seven days. Then during that same period where the chemicals were soaking into the rock we went fishing on a river and caught a bunch of piranha and catfish. It was awesome, but the tour was the light at the end of the

tunnel. Templeman works at a grocery store, Joel works at a vegetarian restaurant as a waiter, and Brandon was doing a six-week field study to get a geology degree.

How do you think you've contributed to exposing the pop-punk scene?

There's a certain amount of balls that our record has. I think *Total* is a refreshing thing for people who have lost hope in pop punk. For Screeching Weasel and Ramones fans, we're a breath of fresh air compared to all the emo shit that's out there nowadays. When we started TBR we were interested in playing songs that we like first and foremost. It doesn't matter if anybody else likes it or not. We're not turning our backs on that sound. —Rachel Labriola

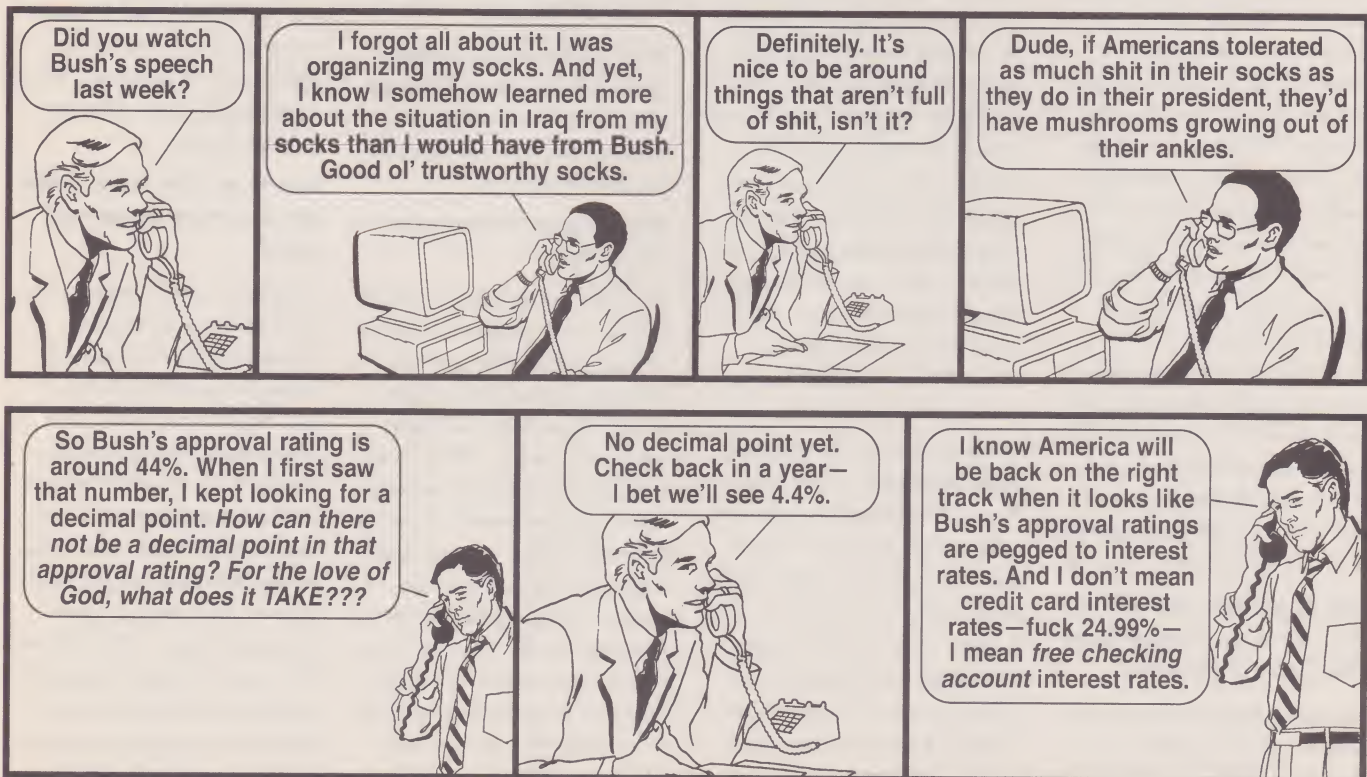


"There is a lot of goofy rap and bullshit, but every genre of music is like that."

THE FLASH EXPRESS COMBINE SWAGGER AND EMOTION WITH A HEAVY TOUR SCHEDULE

The Flash Express sound like they're from Detroit, but instead they've been gracing their fellow Los Angelenos with raw soul for the past four years. Front man Brian Waters is a Florida transplant who moved to LA in the late '80s. Once settled, he started the Countdowns, a prototype for the Flash Express, in 1995. During that time, the Countdowns backed up the legendary Andre Williams, and Waters, on his own, played guitar for the late Dee Dee Ramone. By 2001, the Flash Express had come to fruition. Known for their incendiary live shows, the band's been constantly touring since their inception. In a sea of retro-rock revival, the band brings a legitimacy lacking in get-rich-quick major label garbage. Waters brings his own James Brown-esque swagger, singing with the conviction of a preacher, trying to dispel the evils of the Jet. The rhythm section of Lance Porter (drums) and Tommy Branch (bass) plays like Lester Bangs giving Al Jackson some of his Romilar and Donald Dunn a Ramones record. It's not hyperbole when Waters' wails: "Tired of music that ain't got no feelin'/we gonna rock the floor to the ceiling now!"

Get Your War On BY DAVID REES



You're pretty much the only band to successfully dedicate an album to both Dee Dee Ramone and Jam Master Jay.

We dedicated our album to some other people, too. We dedicated it to Joey Ramone, Bianca from Betty Blowtorch who died that same year, and Ernie K-Doe—he was famous for a song called “Mother-In-Law.” Andre Williams produced him. I met Ernie through Andre when I was in New Orleans. We pulled into New Orleans, it was in early in the morning, and Andre just happened to see The Mother-in-Law Lounge, and said, “Oohhhh, Brian, stop the truck.” He goes and pounds on the door, and this guy answers the door in a robe with curlers in his hair. That was Ernie. We hung out at The Mother-in-Law Lounge; his wife made us drinks. He was a sweet guy. His wife still runs The Mother-in-Law Lounge.

So tell me about Andre Williams. How did you hook up with him?

We hooked up with him through my friend Larry Hardy who does In the Red Records. He wanted to find a band that could tour with Andre and he asked us if we could and, of course, I jumped at the opportunity. And at that time I knew Andre only through these comps called *Born Bad*. He had a song called “Jailbait” on those. And that was a song he did back in the '50s on Fortune.

Andre is a pretty notorious guy, did you learn a lot from him?

“Omaha is where we are from and where we are staying.”

SADDLE CREEK SPEEDS UP WORK ON SLOWDOWN, THEIR AMBITIOUS NEW INDIE MUSIC VENUE

Not a bad year for Saddle Creek Records: a barrage of national media attention, critical acclaim for Bright Eyes' duo full-length releases *I'm Wide Awake, It's Morning* and *Digital Ash in a Digital Urn*, soaring record sales. So where does the Omaha-based record label—now one of the most successful independent labels in the US—go from here? The answer is: nowhere.

Nowhere, geographically speaking. Amid the upsurge of media buzz—generated by such bands as Cursive, the Faint, and that little Conor Oberst act—Saddle Creek has remained loyal to its Nebras-

ka roots, approaching success with an enduring commitment to the local scene. “Omaha is where we are from and where we are staying,” says label manager Jason Kulbel. “We have always really liked the town and the people here.”

Just how much do they like Omaha? Kulbel and label co-owner Robb Nansel are planning to build a music venue in the city's North Downtown, currently the focus of intense revitalization efforts. The 400-capacity venue will be named Slowdown, after former Saddle Creek band Slowdown Virginia, a band Kulbel de-

All kinds of stuff like that; a lot of hustler wisdom. A lot as a performer, too. I studied him a lot. He's brilliant. He's a great performer and a great character. He had a big influence on me.

Did you have a lot of hip-hop influence growing up?

Totally. Run DMC and Public Enemy—both made a big impression on me when I was a kid. I remember [when I was young] one week my favorite songs were “Grease Lightning” from the *Grease* soundtrack and “The Message.” I got turned onto that stuff really young. I had a lot of black friends, and I got into rock music from my cool older cousins and uncles who were all into Aerosmith.

Were there any bands that you were influenced by that were able to combine those two genres together?

You know, I listen to a lot of rap music, but it is not like we are a Limp Bizkit rock-rap combo. I would never think of rapping or trying to be a rapper. The thing I like about that music is that the personalities really come across in the songs. It is like a dude is talking to *you*, there is nothing pretentious about it. I mean there is a lot of goofy rap and bullshit, but every genre of music is like that. That is what appeals to me, and that is how I go about writing lyrics. I could never sing something that I wouldn't say. I don't use a lot of big words. —Ryan Leach

Watch their European Tour movie: www.theflashexpress.com/eurotour.htm.

scribes as hugely important—“beyond influential”—to everyone on the label. In addition to the music hall, which will feature a state-of-the-art sound system and serve as a showcase for national touring and local acts, the club will include a bar, warehouse, and office space. But it doesn't end there.

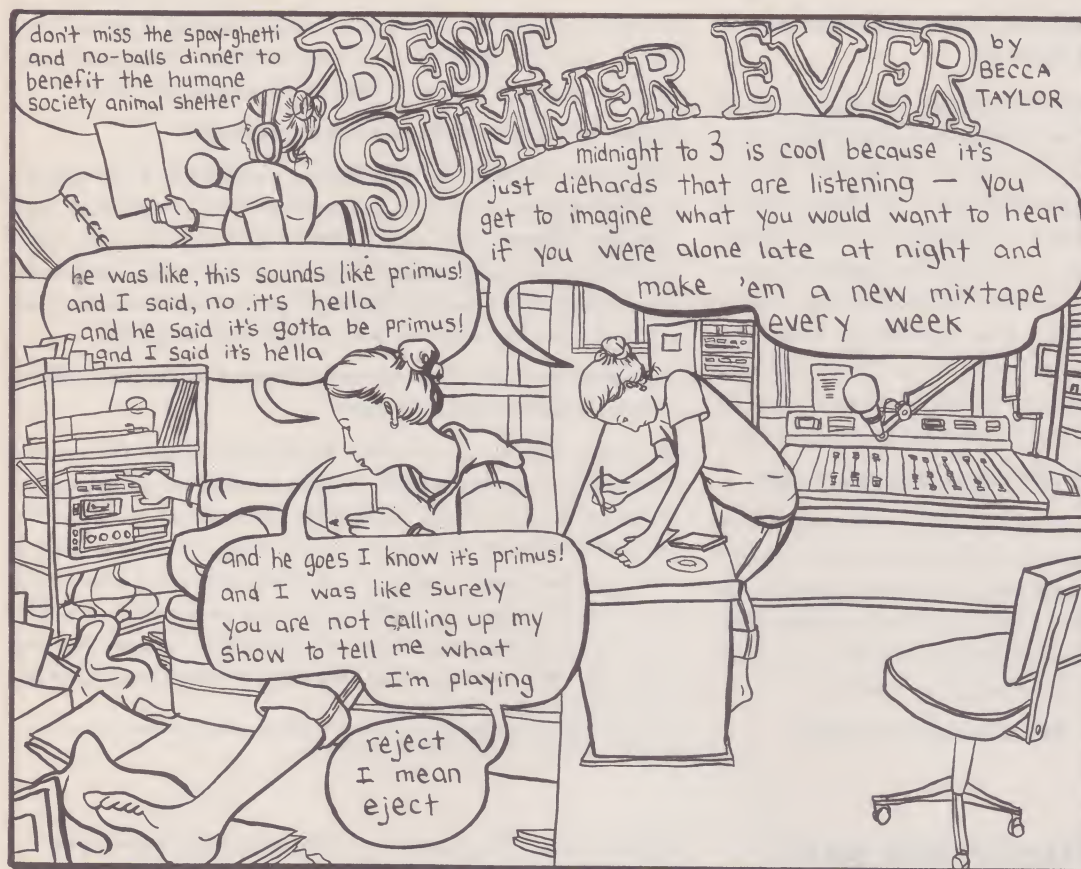
The original venue has now evolved into a full-fledged civic development project. Partnering with Bluestone Development, Saddle Creek also intends to build seven retail spaces, a non-corporate pizza restaurant, an independent movie theater, and an apartment complex.

“The project has gone through several different phases,” Kulbel says. “We have been to a ton of clubs over the years and have found a lot of things we like and don't like.

We tried to take all our past experience and design what we felt was the right place.”

The residential and retail spaces will function less as financial investments for the record label and more as community investments—an effort to establish a more thriving arts scene in an area of Omaha now dominated by pawn shops, shuttered factories, and empty rail yards. Saddle Creek plans to lease the businesses and apartments to friends, artists, and people who share their vision for a stronger Omaha arts community.

In some cases, the “support” for arts is financial. In the case of the independent movie theater, the label is building the two-screen structure, and Rachel Jacobson, a University of Illinois graduate and Omaha native, will operate it as a not-



for-profit. “I envisioned this project about five years ago, when I was living in New York,” she says. “[Then] Robb [Nansell] called me last December and said ‘We’re going to build you a theater.’” Jacobson pointed out that because Omaha has mostly megaplex cinemas that show primarily Hollywood movies, an independent option would be welcome: “I think people will want to support a nonprofit, given the cultural landscape of the city.”

The up-and-coming North Downtown area—or “NoDo,” as it has been nicknamed—wasn’t the original intended location for Slowdown. Initially, the label planned to open the venue in the Met-

calf Park neighborhood on North Saddle Creek Road, but residents there vehemently protested. “The thought of a ‘dirty, drug-filled rock club’ in their neighborhood was appalling to them,” Kulbel says.

Refusing to abandon their plans, Kulbel and Nansell began investigating other sites. At the same time, city planners and Council members started offering more support for the project, recognizing it not simply as a rock venue but also as an act of civic engagement.

“Saddle Creek’s investment is helping redevelop an area that will become a new destination for our city,” says Mayor Mike Fahey. “They have built a tremendous reputa-

tion, and we’re proud they call Omaha home.”

If no construction or city politics issues slow things down, Saddle Creek plans to open the club/bar/offices in late spring of 2006, with Bluestone completing the rest of the facility a year, possibly two years, later.

Meanwhile, there is a palpable excitement among Omahans, who have long-awaited such a venue. With so much publicity surrounding the local music scene, it seems likely that there would already be a handful of Slowdowns, but this is decidedly not the case. “There are a million bands in this town and nowhere to play,” Fox says. “There has

never been one place that consistently has all-ages shows, and the only real venue now is in the basement of an old social hall, which lacks the amenities of a lot of clubs.”

Although this ambitious, costly, and labor-intensive project has been years in the making, Kulbel and Nansell don’t view Slowdown as some wildly heroic feat; rather, they look at it as an obvious and thoughtful way of responding to local needs.

“It’s no secret the [Omaha] arts scene has historically been weak—or maybe underappreciated—would be a better way to put it. We are in a position to do something nice to further the city,” Kulbel says. —Laura Pearson ©

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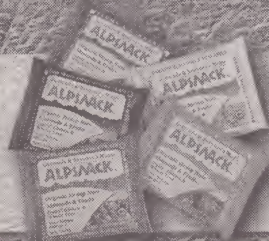
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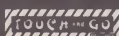
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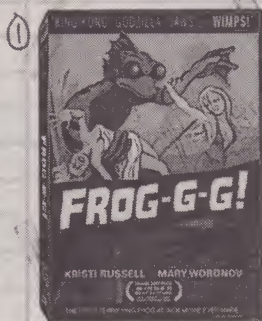
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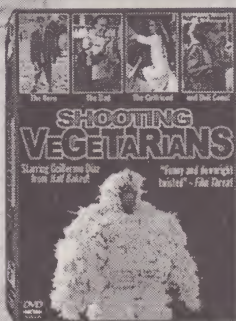


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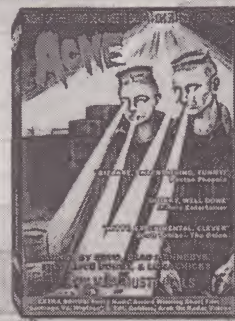
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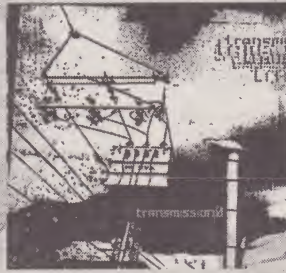
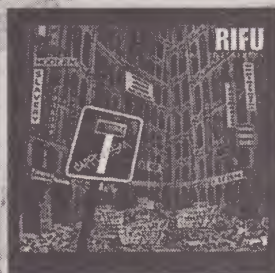


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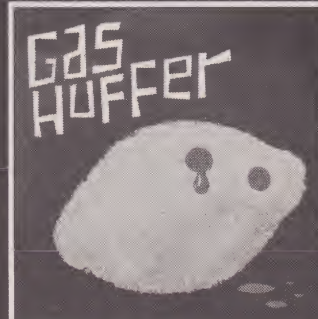
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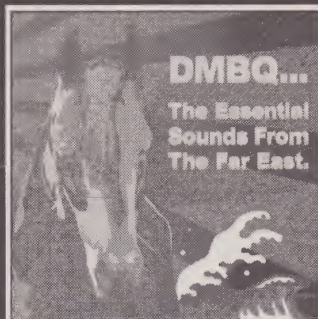
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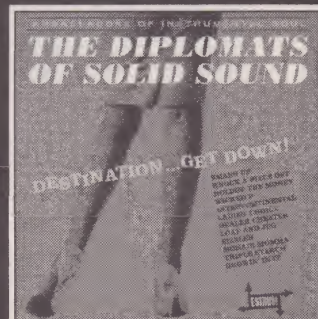
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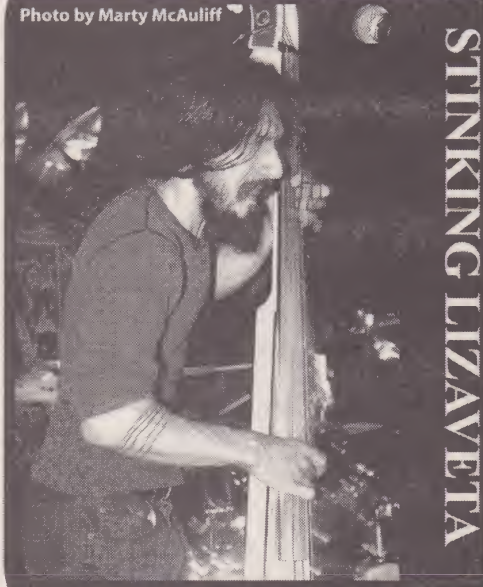
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Ron Kovic

In the fall of 1974, at the Chateau Marmont Hotel in Hollywood, a paralyzed and politicized veteran of the still-raging war in Vietnam dictated battlefield memories to a friend:

The blood is still rolling off my flak jacket from the hole in my shoulder and there are bullets cracking into the sand all around me. I keep trying to move my legs but I cannot feel them. I try to breathe but it is difficult. I have to get out of this place, make it out of here somehow.

Someone shouts from my left now, screaming for me to get up. Again and again he screams, but I am trapped in the sand.

Oh get me out of here, get me out of here, please someone help me! Oh help me, please help me. Oh god oh Jesus! "Is there a corpsman?" I cry. "Can you get a corpsman?"

There is a loud crack and I hear the guy behind me sob. "They've shot my fucking finger off! Let's go, Sarge! Let's get outta here!"

"I can't move," I gasp. "I can't move my legs! I can't feel anything!" . . .

A tall black man with long skinny arms and enormous hands picks me up and throws me over his shoulder as bullets begin cracking over our heads like strings of firecrackers. Again and again they crack as the sky swirls around us like a cyclone. "Motherfuckers motherfuckers!" he screams. And the rounds keep cracking and the sky and the sun on my face and my body all gone, all twisted up dangling like a puppet's, diving again and again into the sand, up and down, rolling and cursing, gasping for breath. "Goddamn goddamn motherfuckers!"

That's the opening scene in Ron Kovic's 1976 memoir, *Born on the Forth of July*, re-

cently reissued by Akashic Books. The book inspired the 1989 Academy-Award winning film of the same name, directed by Oliver Stone and starring Tom Cruise as Kovic.

The book and the film cemented in the American imagination the archetype of a new variety of war veteran. Not proud, but angry. Not steady, but traumatized. Not telling tales of battlefield drama to glorify war, but to eradicate it.

Today Kovic, 59, lives alone in a modest Redondo Beach apartment a short distance from the Pacific Ocean—and a couple of towns away from another apartment in Santa Monica where a young Kovic pounded furiously through many nights at a \$42 dollar typewriter he had picked up at a Sears & Roebuck.

I visited Kovic recently at his Redondo Beach apartment and we went together to a neighborhood Thai restaurant. He was in a motorized wheelchair—he had only weeks earlier made the switch from manual to motorized—and even with my long legs and my usually too-brisk pace I struggled to keep up.

Inside the restaurant, waiting for our food, we talk about Iraq. Not surprisingly, Kovic has some strong opinions on the current war and the political climate that surrounds it. He runs through the familiar laundry list of the Bush Administration's lies and manipulations. He talks about a book he wants to write. A book "about our country and the soul of our country," he says. "About who we really are."

I don't say it, but I think: you already wrote that book.

He talks about the wounded coming home. So many of them. He wonders if some soldier—some amputee or paraplegic—will write like he wrote 30 years ago; will "write the truth."

Kovic wrote his truth at a time when he had tried everything else. He had organized against the war in Vietnam, he had protested, he had been beaten (and once nearly suffocated face down in the back of a police wagon) and he had been arrested and put on trial. He had survived the war, he had survived intensive care, and after a dramatic transformation from a pro-war patriot to anti-war dissident, he had

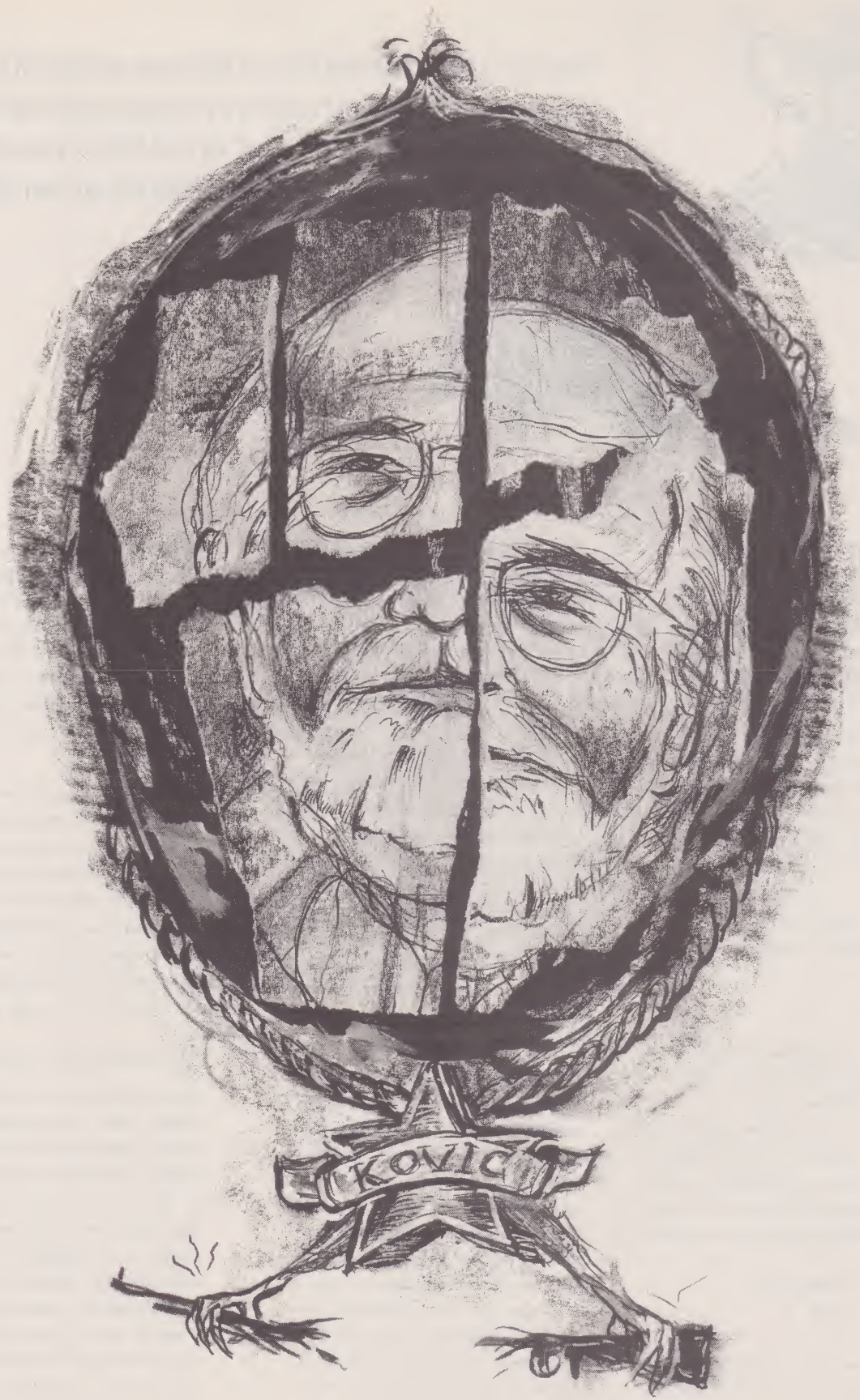
survived the rigors of endless protest. And the war was not over.

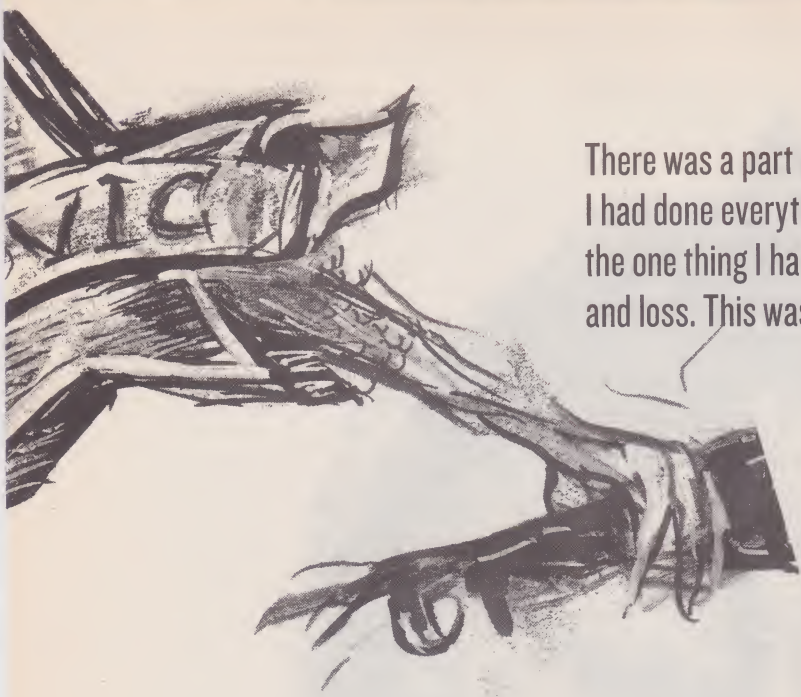
"I honestly believed," he wrote in his book, "people would listen to me because of who I was, a wounded American veteran. They would have to listen. Every chance I had to get my broken body on the tube or in front of an audience I went hog wild. Yes, let them get a look at me. Let them be reminded of what they'd done when they sent my generation off to war. One look would be enough—worth more than a thousand speeches. But if they wanted speeches I could give them speeches too. There was no end to what I had to tell them."

He had tried just about everything to stop the war. He had told his story countless times, he had never written it. And he loved to write. So late in 1974 he started to write. He wrote feverishly and always at night when he "didn't feel as intimidated." He wrote about growing up in Long Island, NY. He wrote about the Marines who visited his high school "with their dress blue uniforms and their magnificently shined shoes." He wrote raw and true about the war and the killing. And he wrote just as raw and just as true about a body altered forever amidst the kill-or-be-killed—or do both—logic of war. Kovic writes his experiences at a Bronx veteran's hospital with a wrenching candor:

I feel like a big clumsy puppet with all his strings cut. I learn to balance and twist in the chair so no one can tell how much of me does not feel or move anymore. I find it easy to hide from most of them what I am going through. All of us are like this. No one wants too many people to know how much of him has really died in the war. . .

It is OK now. It is all right. Yes it is all right. I have given my dead swinging dick for America. I have given my numb young dick for democracy. It is gone and numb, lost somewhere out there by the river where the artillery is screaming in. Oh god oh god I want it back! I gave it for the whole coun-





There was a part of me that felt as if there was nothing left to lose. I had done everything that I could to try to stop the war and this was the one thing I had left: my own soul, my own body, my own disability and loss. This was the one weapon that I had left: my own self.

try. I gave it for every one of them. Yes, I gave my dead dick for John Wayne and Howdy Doody . . . and Sparky the barber. Nobody ever told me I was going to come back from this war without a penis. But I am back and my head is screaming now and I don't know what to do.

Kovic is eating now. "So you can't feel anything from here down?" I ask, placing my hand in a sort of salute from my sternum.

"No," he says, placing his hand a little lower on his chest: "I can't feel anything from here down."

"Do you feel stomach aches?"

"Oh yes. I can feel discomfort in my stomach."

"Strange."

"It is strange."

I glance up at a television hanging on a wall just over Kovic's left shoulder. Oddly, it's Tom Cruise. *Jerry McGuire* is on.

I don't mention Cruise to Kovic right away. Instead, I ask him another perhaps-too-probing question about his physical condition. He starts to smile. It's a sweet, gentle smile. He's staring over my shoulder and now at me. He seems lost in a memory.

"Why are you smiling?" I ask.

"Honestly?" he says.

"Of course." I say.

"I'm smiling because a beautiful woman just walked through the door and it made me feel really nice. That's all."

Kovic is sincere—sometimes painfully so and other times delightfully so. It's like he can't help it. It's what makes his book one of the most compelling documents of the human cost of war that I have ever read. This is, moreover, what makes him so important today. No soldier has written this war's *Born on the Forth of July*. But the book—which is a timeless statement on all war—stands as a placeholder. A warning.

"The paraplegics, amputees, burn victims, the blinded and maimed, shocked and stunned, brain damaged and psychologically stressed, now fill our veterans hospitals," Kovic writes in his new introduction to the 2005 edition of the book. "Most of them were not even born when I came home wounded to the Bronx VA in 1968. The same lifesaving medical-evacuation procedures that kept me alive in Vietnam are bringing home a whole new generation of severely maimed from Iraq." He continues:

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which afflicted so many of us after Vietnam, is just now beginning to appear among soldiers recently returned from the current war. For some, the agony and suffering, the sleepless nights, anxiety attacks, and awful bouts of insomnia, loneliness, alienation, anger, and rage, will last for decades, if not their whole lives. They will be trapped in a permanent nightmare of that war, of killing another man, a child, watching a friend die . . .

fighting against an enemy that can never be seen, while at any moment someone—a child, a woman, an old man, anyone—might kill you. These traumas return home with us and we carry them, sometimes hidden, for agonizing decades. They deeply impact our daily lives, and the lives of those closest to us.

Kovic still works against war. He was constantly speaking out in the months leading up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq. And more than two years on, he keeps busy with interviews and talks at high schools and colleges. The years have taken some of the anger away, but none of the edge. Where he once shouted at television cameras, fist pumping, today he has a monk-like calm. He is a man settled into his mission.

"I am nearly 60 now," he describes:

My hair and beard are almost completely white. The nightmares and anxiety attacks have all but disappeared, but I still do not sleep well at night. I toss and turn in increasing physical pain. But I remain very positive and optimistic. I am still determined to rise above all of this . . . I now believe I have suffered for a reason, and in many ways I have found that reason in my commitment to peace and nonviolence. My life has been a blessing in disguise, even

with the pain and great difficulty that my physical disability continues to bring . . .

"I saw firsthand what our government's terrible policy had wrought," he continues.

I endured; I survived and understood. The one gift I was given in that war was an awakening. I became a messenger, a living symbol, an example, a man who learned that love and forgiveness are more powerful than hatred, who has learned to embrace all men and women as my brothers and sisters. No one will ever again be my enemy, no matter how hard they try to frighten and intimidate me. No government will ever teach me to hate another human being. I have been given the task of lighting a lantern, ringing a bell, shouting from the highest rooftops, warning the American people and citizens everywhere of the deep immorality and utter wrongness of this approach to solving our problems, pleading for an alternative to this chaos and madness, this insanity and brutality. We must change course.

After dinner we returned to Kovic's apartment, with a stop in the garage to have a look at his new van from the United States Department of Veteran's Affairs. He can drive his wheelchair right up to the steering wheel and drive the van. "Go ahead, get in, take a look around," he tells me after opening the door by remote control.

"Pretty cool!" I yell from inside the van. But I didn't mean to say that. I'm taking it all in: this government gift to one of its best-known war veterans, who was paralyzed—and he is one of the lucky ones—in a war most Americans now call a mistake. Kneeling in the empty space made to fit Kovic's motorized wheelchair, a poem he wrote and put at the beginning of his book is stuck in my head like a song:

*I am the living death
the memorial day on wheels
I am your yankee doodle dandy
your john wayne come home
your fourth of july firecracker
exploding in the grave*

Interview by **Jeff Severns Guntzel**

Illustration by **Dan Grzeca**

Born of the 4th of July was first published in 1976 . . .

It was not an easy time to get a book about Vietnam published.

Yet you succeeded. And it was not a thing so simple as "a book about Vietnam." Your book is an unusually intimate and frank account of an incredible personal transformation.

This was a book that came out of my suffering; it came out of my ordeal and struggle in a particularly volatile time in American history. The war was still going on when I began writing it in the fall of 1974 in Santa Monica with that \$42 typewriter. ¶ I was tired. I had been protesting, I had been arrested and I had been put on trial. I was doing everything I could to try to stop the war and to save lives on both sides—it was life and death. Back then everything was so sharp. I felt as if each day I was living was my last. ¶ I still think back to that moment in the sand as I was wounded in the foot and then in the shoulder and I couldn't move my legs anymore—how extraordinary that that even happened to me; that I was in that place and that I survived it. I don't look back upon that time with the same fear that I once did. It was too difficult to even think about the incidents in the war the first few years after I came home. It was just too overwhelming, too frightening.

Did you write the book to deal with that fear?

I never made the connection that writing about it might help. It was not a motivational factor in the writing of the book. ¶ I had done everything that I could at the time: speaking out against the war, speaking at colleges and high schools, marching, demonstrating, traveling across the country being arrested and beaten up and threatened.

But you had not tried writing. How did you decide to turn to the typewriter?

I knew I could write and tell a story, even though you would have never known it by my grades in school. It just came naturally when I got behind a typewriter. Even in school I couldn't stop writing once I started. ¶ There was a part of me that felt as if there was nothing left to lose. I had done everything that I could to try to stop the war and this was the one thing I had left:

my own soul, my own body, my own disability and loss. This was the one weapon that I had left: my own self. ¶ And in that apartment in Santa Monica I was able to create, at least for a brief moment, some neutral ground and an environment—as monastic as it was—which enabled me to feel safe and enabled me to feel that I could create and that I could contribute.

What kind of contribution did you hope to make?

I really felt the need to do something that was positive; something that was life affirming. Even though there was such a great deal of torment inside of me at that period, I still believed in this world. I thought of Anne Frank and how she had written even during the worst times. They were in the annex and she talked about how she still felt that this world was a beautiful place. ¶ There had been so many awful things and so much horror and pain and sorrow and suffering that I wanted to create something that was worthy and beautiful and something that could rise above that stigma and that feeling of victimization.

That's not an easy thing to do.

I knew what I had to do was to tell the story and to tell the truth. I knew that there was an awesome power in me being authentic and being real—by telling the truth beyond ideology and beyond political correctness. I knew that if we could write and speak from the very heart of who we were, if we could write that truth and if we could tell the most embarrassing and shameful things—the things we all try to hide in the deepest and darkest places and the things that we feel that no one will ever understand—this would always lead us in the right direction. I sensed instinctively that these dark places, these places that people felt would humiliate them or destroy them, were the very things that might liberate me. ¶ And there was a power that perhaps this way of writing could in some small way save another life; in some small way keep someone else from having to go through what Ron Kovic had to go through. I had a feeling that if I could put this out there—I just trusted that even though it was frightening to expose these aspects of our personal-

ity and of our selves and our experiences there was a great power for transformation. ¶ I didn't have anyone. I didn't have a telephone. I would start at about 10 o'clock at night. I wrote about 300-350 pages—single space, front and back of the page, and pounding the keys so hard that I would pound periods and you could hold the page up to the light and the light would steam through the periods. ¶ It was passionate, that's the word for it. This wasn't polite; this was something very raw and almost primitive. The words would come to me and they'd come lightening fast.

You said it wasn't easy in the late '70s to get a book about Vietnam published. Did you have any prospects when you started writing?

No. When I finished the manuscript a friend, Roger, was visiting and read it out loud. He loved it and he was the first one to say we need to go to New York—we need to show this to someone. ¶ So we flew across the country to New York—it was a terrible winter—and we checked in to the Chelsea Hotel, we only had enough money for a couple of days. We gave ourselves the week: Monday to Friday. We got a room and Roger grabbed the Yellow Pages and started calling publishers. ¶ He was wonderful. He would get on the phone and he would go on and on about this book that we have. I think he would tell them that we have the definitive book on the Vietnam War—that made me very nervous—and how we've come all the way across and we'd like to see someone. And some of them agreed to see us, amazingly, without any agents or anything. ¶ And so we started catching these cabs in this frigid weather to these different publishing houses and meeting with these people who didn't know what to make of us. Roger would try to read from the manuscript. ¶ It wasn't the formal approach. [Laughs.] Everything was a bit wild and informal but we knew we had something and I was very serious about it. I literally bled for those pages and yet as I look back the whole thing was quite outrageous. But there was so much authenticity to who we were and what we were trying to do. We had a real story and I had opened up my heart and given everything I had. I wrote that book not thinking I was going to live

to see 30. The book was my last will and testament in many ways.

So how did you wind up signing a deal with McGraw-Hill?

We did have a contact [from a friend on the West Coast]. He gave us the name of a woman in New York, an editor at McGraw-Hill. Eventually, after a couple of publishers turned us down outright—a bit befuddled by our presentation—I called the woman at McGraw-Hill and she agreed to see us. She was much more much more open to who we were. She actually allowed Roger to read right from my manuscript, something the other publishers didn't want anything to do with. She asked to see the manuscript for a couple of days. And just as we were running out of money at the Chelsea they called and said they wanted to publish it. ¶ It was all a bit overwhelming to me. I was tormented. Here I was succeeding—they were going to publish my book—and at the same time I was still experiencing a lot of anxiety attacks and nightmares from the war. There was still a great deal of stress and I was suffering inside over things that had happened in the war. It was a lot for a young man who still had not really fully come to terms, if anyone can ever *fully* come to terms, with the trauma of what had happened. I was experiencing a great deal of survivor's guilt. I had survived and so many others did not. I wondered if I had a right to even be here.

You were obviously a terribly conflicted person in those years.

In the intensive care unit in Da Nang, there was this overwhelming feeling that I was dealing with a physical situation that was almost too much and how was I ever going to live with this? At the same time, I was thrilled to be alive and a part of me knew that simply by being alive any possibility was open to me.

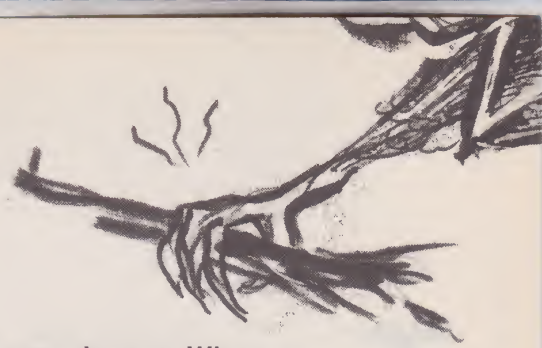
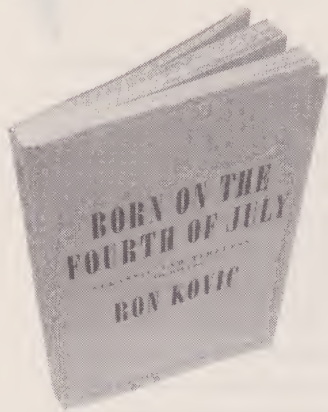
Since its initial publication in 1976, the book only went out of print for about a year and not until quite recently. It was picked up and re-released by Akashic, a decidedly anti-corporate publishing house in Brooklyn. You wrote a new introduction for the book and helped to design the cover. After all these years, what was it like to return to that project?

It was a very different experience. I had fi-

nal say on just about every aspect. I would never do it any other way. It allowed me to feel a part of the process. It's not just about me writing the book. The cover is extremely important—it's a reflection of the book. So often publishers just throw a cover on to try to sell the book and they don't really think of the heart and soul of what you really tried to say. A book is a sacred thing.

Was it difficult to revisit this document of a very tumultuous period in your life?

It put a lot of pressure on me to write the new introduction. When you think of the movie happening and Tom Cruise playing me and the movie winning two Academy Awards—everyone seems to know this movie and this story. I was 28 when I wrote the book. I'm not the same person that sat behind that typewriter in 1974 at that dining room table on Pacific and Third Street in Santa Monica. ¶ There was a part of me that wanted to write an introduction that was equal to the writing I had done during that extraordinary time. I felt almost as if I was competing with that young kid who was so passionate and so intense and who sat behind that typewriter every night so focused and so determined to write something of meaning and to leave something important behind—something of value to know that I had done more than simply been a victim of a terrible injustice paralyzed in a war. ¶ It took me almost three months to write the introduction. That initial burst of writing in 1974 I did in one month, three weeks, and two days. But I was very quietly determined. I knew I could equal that writing. There was a war going on. There were young men who were coming back without arms and legs. There were people dying. I had met a mother in Santa Monica who lost her son in Iraq. ¶ There were these deep feelings that were swirling inside of me. There was a sorrow I was feeling and a pain from the fact that it was happening again; that these young men and women who I had hoped that somehow, through my contribution—through that book, through my writing, through my speaking out against the war—that somehow this country, *my* country, would have listened to me and listened to others



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like me. There were so many others just like myself. Not only veterans, but committed citizens who knew deep in their heart that there is an alternative, and that we mustn't repeat the tragic mistakes of the past, which we did. ¶ It was painful to watch it happen. I did everything that I could to try to stop it. And so all of this was also a part of my motivation in the writing of the introduction. I had to think about the book that I had written when I was a young man and the impact that the book and the film had had, and I had to think of the present time: how would this introduction that I wrote compliment the book? How would this work with the book together become a powerful statement against war? ¶ At first I didn't want to make that journey. I didn't want to have to unearth those feelings. There's a part of me that would like to just leave this behind. It's not a comfortable subject.

So why did you decide to do it?

For years after the book came out I wished that there would have been an additional chapter at the end where I could just talk to the reader. This was my chance to talk to all those who had been affected by this book. I wanted them to know how I had changed. I wanted them to know that I was still deeply committed to peace and nonviolence. I wanted them to know that

my life had been a blessing in disguise. I wanted them to know that I was OK. ¶ There is a lot of rage in the book and there is a lot of sorrow. When you read the book you cannot help, I think, but wonder what became of this person. The original edition of the book began with a poem I had written: "I am the living death / the memorial day on wheels." I wanted them to know that there was more to me than "the living death." There was more to me than "the memorial day on wheels." I am your memorial day on wheels, but I wanted them to know that there was someone who could still love; someone who could still care; someone who could still be happy and excited and someone who was still very grateful to be here and to be a part of an important time in history no matter how frightening or dangerous it might be. ¶ And I wanted them to know that I truly believed our country was heading in the wrong direction and that we needed to change course. No government was ever going to teach me to hate another human being again. The Iraqis and the Vietnamese are all my brothers and sisters. Do not try to tell me someone is my enemy. I'll make those decisions myself. Do not try to intimidate me and frighten me into hating someone so that you can pursue your selfish agenda. ¶ When I think of this book I think of this great journey. This is who I am. There

is something very sacred about a book. I put a lot of work into reissuing this book during another life and death time; during another very important period where hopefully the book can help in some small way save one life and influence people so they don't have to go through what I have gone through.

You write that we "must change course." Do you have any hope for that happening?

We can get so caught up in the politics and so caught up in the rhetoric that we forget that the most important politics of all is the human being. ¶ We contradict ourselves, we make mistakes and we fumble. It's not so perfect, it's not so correct, but after September 11 and after the 2004 elections it's really important that we look toward the human being and toward authenticity. And if we do we'll begin to find a politics and a political direction that is much more successful and much healthier for all of us. We must try to speak from our hearts and articulate our needs from what we are really feeling, not what we feel we're supposed to say—even if it is contradictory and even if it causes criticism. ¶ I think that most people would agree that we are intelligent enough and creative enough to find alternatives to this type of mayhem and behavior. I know that we all have a creative ability and an ability to imagine and to create ourselves beyond and past this

The intrinsic motivations and gleeful passions of Chicago's finest instrumental four-piece, Pelican, come from the band's love of music, politics, nature, and life in general. Together, guitarist Laurent Lebec, guitarist Trevor de Brauw, drummer Bryan Herweg and bassist Larry Herweg have helped to evolve Pelican from a homespun, Neurosis-influenced newcomer into a unique, monolithic force all its own.

Drowned in an ocean of cascading, adventurous dual guitar lines, thundering rhythms, and off-kilter time-signatures, all laced together with marrow-deep levels of emotion, Pelican confidently displays its reputation alongside the current luminaries of instrumental rock, not to mention helping to redefine the standards traditionally associated with this type of sound. What could keep Pelican on course when so many sidetracks could steer them into the murky depths? According to recent North Carolina transfer de Brauw, the answer is simple: hope. While this may sound like a rather simple solution, oddly enough it is the very glue that holds Pelican together, even in the midst of chance and change. And Pelican's most recent full-length, *The Fire in Our Throats Will Beckon the Thaw* (Hydrahead Records), provides listeners just such an anchor for themselves.

What follows is a conversation with de Brauw just a few days before Pelican's recent departure to Japan and its eventual summer-long trek across the US. Although it is apparent that de Brauw and his comrades are weary of artistic clichés and suspect foreign policy, among a slew of other obstacles, it's hard not to glean inspiration from the way the band carries itself.

Interview by **Brian Peterson**
Photography by **Mike Novak**

Pelican has evolved quite a bit since its inception. How have the changes the band has gone through mirrored those from your own day-to-day life?

It's kind of hard to notice that stuff when you're in the midst of it because when you grow it's so gradual that you hardly notice

it is happening. When I think of the stuff we are doing now I think, "This is the sound I've always wanted for the band." But then I look back a year ago and remember thinking the exact same thing. As friends we've definitely grown closer because there is so much you can communicate with friends just sitting around and chatting, but when you share a musical bond with people it's this very deep level of communication that you get into. When you start out in a band, you tend to be more focused on what you are doing with, but as you grow as a band you begin to realize that every single voice is a part of the conversation. With the success that we've had so far, it's made us much more intent on forging that bond and embarking on that conversation.

What kind of "conversations" have you been recently having that have influenced your new record?

I think the music of Pelican is deeply humanist and instead of reveling in the despair that tends to plague the left, I think as dark and as bleak as everything is in the world it's important to maintain hope. Deep down inside nobody really wants to be a "bad" person. If you put hope and expectation in people they will recognize that and people will end up turning toward the good. I know that's a statement borrowed from *Return of the Jedi* [laughs], but ultimately that's how I feel.

What gives you hope?

Sometimes the only time I am feeling hope is when I am playing music. [Laughs.] I think our music is positive in scope and when I see people respond to listening to music that's heavy but ultimately positive, that makes me think that other people see that sense of hope and also recognize that there is that element of possibility still out there.

Do you think that, overall, having a "message" is a good or bad thing?

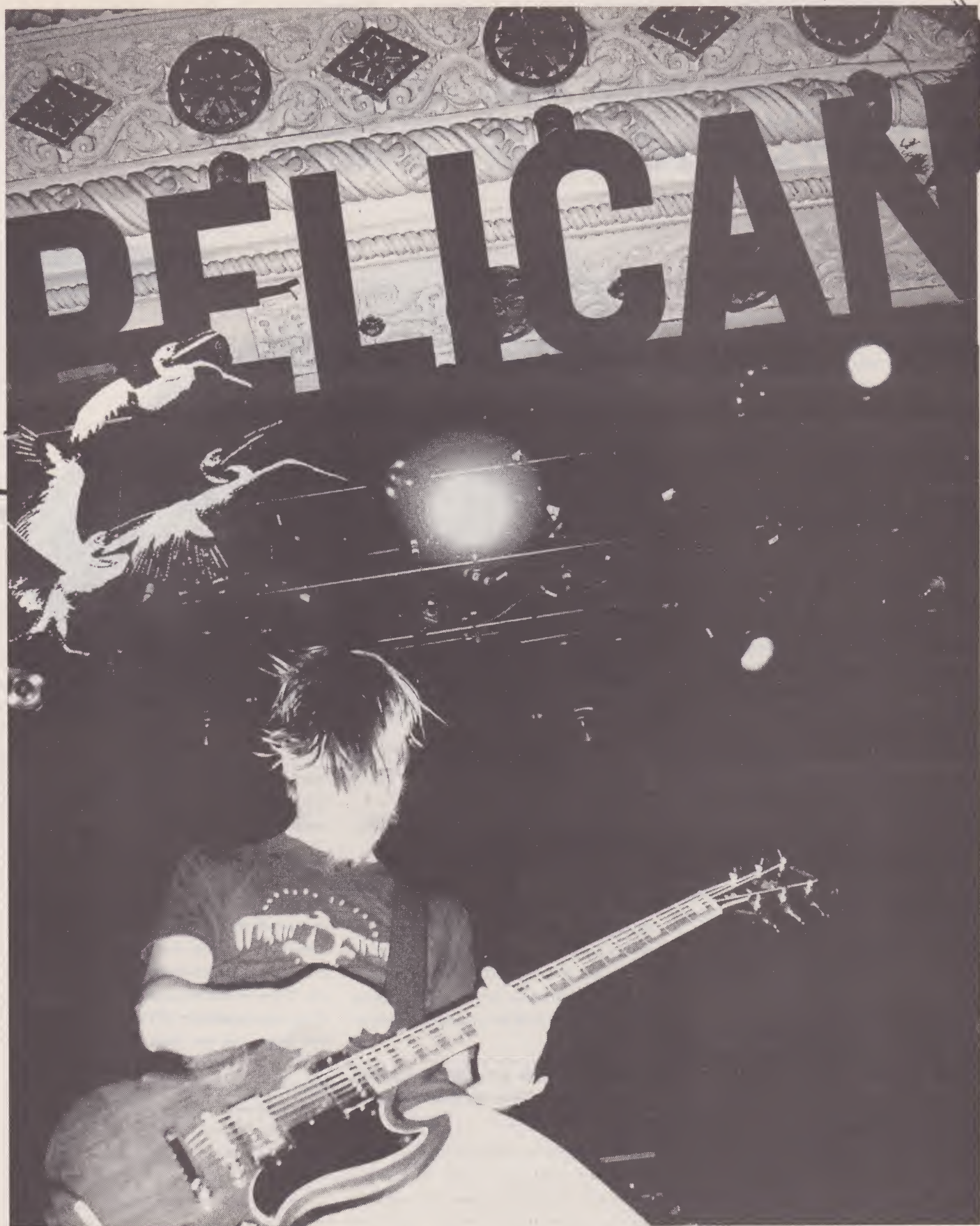
I have a friend who used to be into anarchist politics and then he turned into a Democrat. I recently had this long talk with him . . . I'm always asking myself: "Is what I'm doing worth it?" Not only is it really impossible to gauge whether or not your art is having any kind of influence on society or culture, but we're an instrumental band so there's another layer removed from setting forth a message or any kind of goal-orientation . . . My friend had gone to this revolutionary Communist gathering in Venezuela and he was really excited about it but he said ultimately he didn't agree with those people because if you don't have the cultural revolution first then the people aren't going to understand the politics you are trying to put forward. Even if you have a successful revolution it could turn into a dictatorship right away. So, that brings the question of how do you bring about the cultural revolution. It's so hard to gauge. Ultimately, you just have to do whatever it is you have to do and hope for the best.

As an instrumental band, do you have an agenda or message to spread?

We didn't want to get into soap-boxing to anybody and we've always been into the idea of the freedom of the audience to interpret things the way they will. Our conscious ideology is to let people decide their own lives and their own interpretation of our music. For instance, the title of our new record—*The Fire in Our Throats Will Beckon the Thaw*—is pretty political in its inclination but it by no means should have a fixed meaning for anyone in their lives. We try to choose imagery and sonic elements that we think are more ambiguous because ultimately when you give people more intellectual freedom it causes them to be more creative in their own lives and their own interpretations.

You guys seem to have a nature-based theme recurring through all of your records.

What that boils down to is that we're all from Chicago and we're all nature lovers but we don't have a lot of access to that in



"I THINK AS DARK AND AS BLEAK AS EVERYTHING IS IN THE WORLD IT'S IMPORTANT TO MAINTAIN HOPE."

our lives. Actually, I just moved to North Carolina to become a farmer because I'm sick of the city. [Laughs.] We all struggle with issues of the city encroaching itself on our lives. We're all addicted to a life of comfort that only the city can provide, but we're also crowded by buildings and technology. Pelican at its roots is, in fact, electric music because amplified guitars and rock and roll wouldn't exist without electric instruments.

What inspired you to become a farmer and to actually escape from the city?

When I was in college I took some Marxist philosophy courses and I had this really good professor who had us read this book comparing the city to the agricultural parts of the country and how they influence each other. We also read a lot of Wendell Perry. So I was like, "Wow, that would be so great to start a farm and live off the land." I ended up filing that under my "dream file" for the future. The past couple of years the band has talked about moving but it became apparent that nobody was really going to move. My girlfriend and I were really fed up and wanted to get out of there. Her father had bought some farmland sort of as an investment and he had been harping about how he wished that there was someone to take care of the land and he wants to build it back up to something much nicer. So, he graciously took the opportunity to let us live on his land.

Have any of these experiences been an inspiration on the title of *The Fire in Our Throats Will Beckon the Thaw*?

One thing about living in Chicago is we all hate the winters. [Laughs.] We recorded the album during the winter and we wanted a title that spoke to the condition of the country, but at the same time we have those naturalistic themes in a lot of our titles. We



suffered through the cold and started to see parallels between the two. So, the title came out of those feelings.

And how have these feelings affected the tenor of your music?

The thing that brought us together was the crappiness of our lives. Nothing brought us together more than being at work and hating it. That helped the creative process quite a bit. It's a little different for me now that I've been away for a couple months and have come back for practices before we leave on tour.

Do you feel like you guys were able to work through some of these emotions during the writing of this record?

The writing was very cathartic and I think we found an outlet for a lot of the frustrations that we had in our lives. The recording was another story; that was a whole new

bucket of anxiety. [Laughs.]

Coming from a punk background, did you have any struggles in maintaining a DIY perspective when it comes to Pelican?

As soon as you let somebody else put out your record you've already made a pretty big sacrifice. We're a democracy in Pelican and we all vote on issues as they come up. Certainly, some of the things we've done I've felt were bigger compromises than others. When we started doing the band everything was completely DIY—we self-released our demo and got them into stores and distributors ourselves. But things started happening for the band much quicker than we could possibly keep up with and with all of us working full-time jobs there were so many demands on the band that we didn't feel we could handling everything so we felt it was necessary to give up a certain degree of freedom in exchange for other people

helping us. Some of the stuff rubs me the wrong way but at the same time when you are already locked into the careerist mindset it's immensely difficult to follow the Dischord model or to try and start something like that up again, which I would think would be ideal. I'd much rather be in the shoes of a DIY enterprise like that than be someone who doesn't necessarily have any control over what stores carry our CDs. I tend to get a guilt complex about it from time to time.

How come?

I don't want assholes making money off of our music. [Laughs.] If I could keep it out of Virgin Megastore or whatever that would be great, but it's not practical because that would take up my entire life and everybody needs to find some balance in his or her life where they are happy. I'm not going to be happy spending my entire life trying to

track down where every single Pelican CD is.

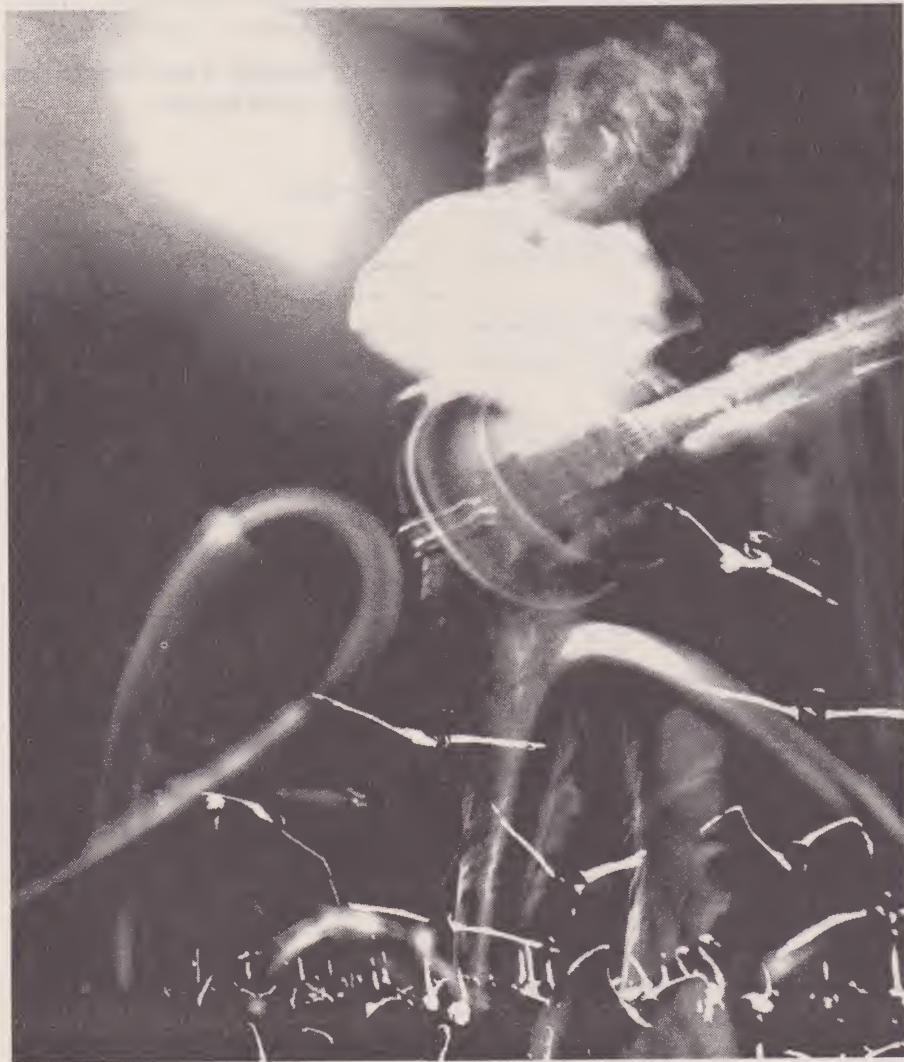
How has the way underground music is marketed at this point affected Pelican?

When the change started to happen, and there has definitely been a major change from the days I got into it to where they are now, it really scared me because labels started to follow business models that were a lot closer to how major labels operate. I can remember when labels started to go with exclusive distributors, which I think was a big turning point. From there, glossy ads in major newsstand magazines started to pop up. There's a part of me that's kind of elitist that insists this is all terrible because money goes into the wrong hands; we're redistributing money that should be going into the punk scene and funneling it into these messed up companies and maybe you're at-

tracting an audience that's is not going to really latch onto punk rock in the way we understand it to be. But the more democratic take on it is there is no reason to exclude anybody from your scene and if you're opening up new possibilities for them to be open to what you have to say and for you to be open to what they have to say then that's applying to a view of punk rock that is about evolving. When the punk scene started to change it worried me but I've come to realize it's just sort of the natural flow of things. Yeah, people need to be conscious to not let ourselves fall into the traps that former rebellious movements have fallen into, but at the same time you see these independent labels that are doing their job better than the major labels are. I really believe that there is a very limited time frame on the major label industry whereas I see the independent music scene continuing to grow every year and ultimately people's tastes are constantly expanding. With file-sharing, it seems like people are getting more of a taste of random culture and I don't think major labels will be able to keep up anymore.

So, you are able to retain a sense of hope?

When more interesting or technically advanced music filters into the mainstream people still eat it up as in the case with Outkast or Radiohead. There's this song out now by Missy Elliot, in fact, that is the most experimental song I've ever heard on the radio. There's no verse, no chorus, a loop from a Kraftwerk song, four layers of percussion and it's just shouting. It sounds like Einstürzende Neubauten. [Laughs.] It hardly sounds like music and it's completely blowing up. When I think about my teenage years of listening to Neubauten and thinking, "I listen to this dark music that no one else can understand," and then I turn on the radio and there's Missy Elliot doing a similar thing . . . maybe people do get it. [Laughs.] This applies to Pelican, too. We write these long instrumental songs that require a long attention span and people seem to respond to it. This is at a time when many are saying that people have no attention span and television has ruined everybody's minds and nobody responds to positivity. I see the opposite and, yes, that does give me hope. ©



Conservatives and religious extremists have gotten awfully good at language games; it's hard to pick up a paper without reading about "faith-based initiatives," "compassionate conservatives," "personal accounts," "intelligent design," "the global struggle against extremism," or some other Orwellian twaddle. It's enough to make illiteracy seem like the way to go.

However, on a smaller scale, Seattle-based sex columnist Dan Savage—who firmly believes that "mockery is an important part of the political process"—has won a decisive and hilarious victory in the language war: his successful campaign to reinvent Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum's last name as "the frothy mix of lube and fecal matter that is sometimes the byproduct of anal sex."

It all began with Santorum's comparison of homosexual sex (and any non-procreative nookie) to man-on-dog sex in 2003. Soon after, Savage was encouraged by a reader of his weekly *Savage Love* host a contest that would name a sex act after the mega-batshit-insane senator. In Savage's May 15th, 2003 column, he printed the best of over 3000 suggestions, and on June 12, Savage announced that the "frothy mix" definition had won in a landslide.

Savage wisely realized that, without some work, "santorum" wasn't going to spread though the language like VD, so he encouraged santorum-centric questions, wrote several santorum-only columns, and encouraged his readers to use the repurposed surname whenever possible. Since then, the steady seep of "santorum" into the sexual lexicon has been recognized by authorities such as the American Dialect Society and Google, which lists Savage's santorum website (www.spreadingsantorum.com) as the number one hit for "santorum." The term has even been used in the hallowed pages of the *Washington Post*, specifically in an April 18, 2005 feature on the senator that made reference to "a sex columnist's campaign to make his name a synonym for something that cannot be printed in this newspaper."

Meanwhile, Santorum-the-dude has continued to live down to his new identity as "santorum-the-gross-sexual-byproduct" by comparing abortion to slavery and linking the Catholic abuse scandal with Massachusetts liberalism. In a phone conversation, I asked Savage—who edits Seattle's weekly newspaper *The Stranger* and is the bestselling author of *Skipping Towards Gomorrah: The Seven Deadly Sins and*

the Pursuit of Happiness in America and the just-written *The Commitment: Love, Sex, Marriage, and My Family*—for his current take on all things frothy and mixy.

Interview by **Mark Peters**

Why do you think the santorum campaign has been so successful?

The campaign worked because that substance never had a name before, and "santorum" sounds sort of clinical and Latinesque. Also, it resonates really nicely with who Santorum is, because "the frothy mix of lube and fecal matter that is sometimes the byproduct of anal sex" (and only sometimes—if you're doing it right, it shouldn't happen) is an unwelcome disturbance and an unwelcome guest during anal sex, just as the senator is a disturbance and an unwelcome presence in the lives of a lot of Americans. So hanging that around his neck—or smearing him with that substance—is kind of perfect. ¶ It's also perfect in that he disparages other people for their sexuality, and like many Republicans, seems particularly obsessed with non-procreative sex. So for him to be a byproduct of non-procreative sex, gay or straight, is just a brilliant dovetail into all sorts of threads and vibes about the senator.

Since you've haven't updated the santorum website in awhile, can you share any recent notable usages of the word?

Well, it's in Ethan Mordden's book *The Happiest Corpse I've Ever Seen*. He uses "santorum" like you would use "pile of shit"—he describes someone as a "pile of santorum." And Chuck—the guy who wrote *Fight Club* whose name I can never pronounce [*makes a humorous stab at pronouncing "Palahniuk"*]

—I know who you mean—

—It's one of those weird names you see in print all the time, and then you have to say it out loud and you make an asshole out of yourself. He uses it in a recent book. I could look it up because I have 4000 emails telling me that he used it.

Obviously, you know that the American Dialect Society voted "santorum" Most Outrageous Word of 2004, but did you know that in the Summer 2005 issue of *American Speech*, "santorum" is featured in the "Among the New

Words" section. What do you think of this academic and linguistic attention?

I think it's fucking brilliant! ¶ You know, my goal was to get to the senator, and that's kind of where the blog ends that we put up about it. It ends with him being asked about it on video, and a letter from his office saying, "Oh my god, I know about this, and it drives me up the fucking wall." And once I'd reached into his head that was basically what I wanted to do. I was done. I felt like, mission accomplished.

What would you say to a so-called innocent person named Santorum?

Tough luck. You know, you should be mad at Rick Santorum for bringing your name into disrepute. Like all the little Quislings in Norway who didn't work with the Nazis should be upset with the one who did for ruining their good name. And Benedict Arnold, you know, Benedict's not a popular name in America, Pope or no Pope.

Obviously, "santorum" is your linguistic masterpiece, but I know you did—

"Pegging."

Right, "pegging."

It was sort of a dry run for "santorum," though you hate to associate "dry run" with anal sex *at all*. But it was sort of the dry run for "Santorum." My readers said there's no name for this, except the very clunky phrase, "a woman fucking a man in the ass with a strap-on dildo." The readers came up with some suggestions and they voted on them, and "pegging" was it. It was perfect: a peg is a dick-shaped thing; "Peg" is a woman's name; it works for "getting pegged," "pegging," "I was pegged," "you pegged" . . . It was just a word that worked.

Besides those two, have you created new meanings for any other words?

No, and people encourage me to all the time, but I don't want to become that column on the back page of *The Atlantic Monthly*. It's got to be a moment that really calls for it . . . I think maybe I think I'll do one a decade, so people will have to wait till past 2010 for *Savage Love* to weigh in on the next big zeitgeist-y needs-a-word thing. I'm going to save it up and marshal it every once in awhile for something really cool. ©

SPREADING

"The frothy mix of lube and fecal matter that is sometimes the byproduct of anal sex' (and only sometimes—if you're doing it right, it shouldn't happen) is an unwelcome disturbance and an unwelcome guest during anal sex, just as the senator is a disturbance and an unwelcome presence in the lives of a lot of Americans."

Dan Savage on Santorum

SANTORUM

ACTION TERRORISTE SOCIALEMENT ACCEPTABLE

A vehicle sits mangled and charred near a busy downtown intersection. People stop to check out the damage under the glow of giant billboards that play a continuous loop of commercials. They poke their heads inside to see the badly singed upholstery, expressing disbelief at how the hulking metal frame buckled from the heat. Some people look up toward the sky to see if they can catch a glimpse of smoke rising from the wreckage.

But there's something about the scene around the smoldering SUV that doesn't seem real. People are looking around suspiciously. There are no police cruisers or yellow tape, no sirens wailing off in the distance. But the most telling evidence that this wasn't a real car bombing is the lack of panic in the streets.

This is a hyper-realistic art exhibit created by a group called Action Terroriste Socialement Acceptable (Socially Acceptable Terrorist Acts), based out of Montreal, Canada. During the summer, ATSA toured Toronto and Ottawa with the bombed-out SUV under the project name Attack #9. For those unfamiliar with Canada's major cities, Montreal, which is in the French-speaking province of Quebec, is much closer to Europe's heart in attitude than Ontario's cities. But ATSA's presence in Toronto, one of the most culturally diverse cities in the world, seemed to define the clash between two mindsets that continues to become increasingly heated throughout North America.

Since 1997, ATSA founders Annie Roy and Pierre Allard have created art that reacts to problematic realities of capitalism, consumerism, and environmental abuse. They came together as artists in their 30s who wanted to make "art into a motor, turn it into a way to change things to get out messages and get people thinking about matters we thought were important for people to talk about." Their first project was inspired by a news broadcast following the day's bank profits with a list of the needs of a homeless refugee. The result was an "ATM" machine made out of warm things—the machine a stove, the deposits and withdrawals clothing instead of

money. It sat outside a museum, and people would "deposit" clothing, while individuals in need could make "withdrawals." Creations since have included the faux-archaeological site *Parc Industriel* (Industrial Park), which featured modern day disposables to demonstrate how much we consume and waste, and the ecologically conscious *Attention: Zone Epineuse* (which has a double meaning—Botanical or Thorny Zone, or Burning Issue Zone), six installations in a public park that evoked dangers threatening the world's forests.

As all of ATSA's projects are brought into the street, Roy and Allard are present to explain their intentions and answer any questions. On the phone from her Montreal home, Roy reveals that ATSA's upcoming plans are inspired by plastic bags and the cult of branding and hopes the recent "attack" on SUVs sparked enough conversation to make a change. It definitely got people talking. But who's listening?

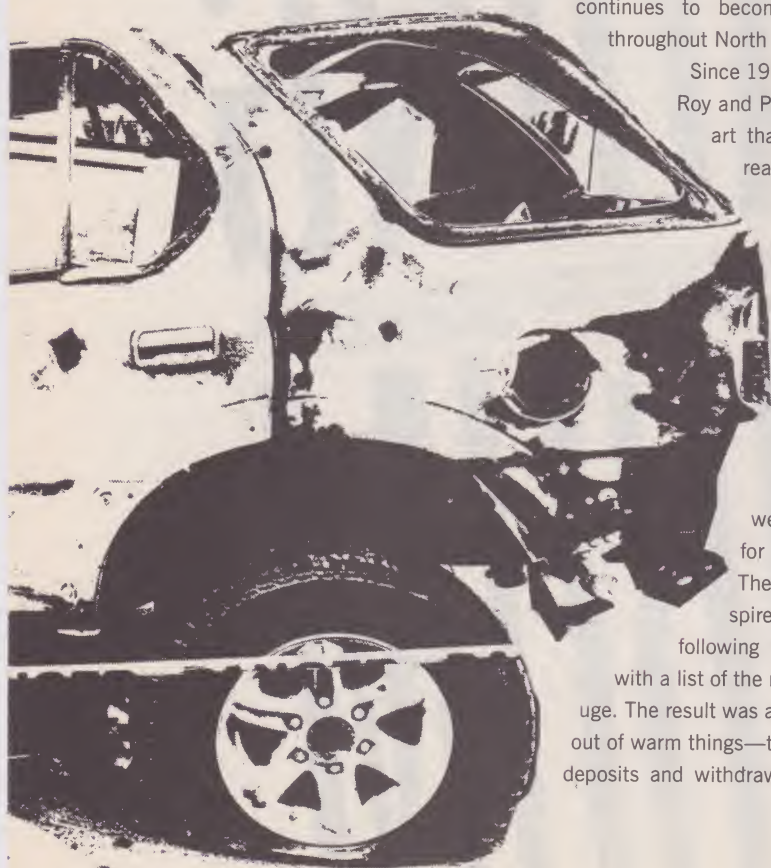
Interview by **Liz Worth**

Why did you choose to target SUVs in your most recent project?

For us it's a symbol of opulence and arrogance. Why do we need these huge vehicles for mostly city conduct? The automobile industry builds [SUVs] under different laws than it does cars. It builds them under light truck regulations after a law that was made for agriculture trucks, done so because they would be carrying heavier loads than regular vehicles. But now SUVs don't have to meet lower efficiency standards like cars, even though they might only carry one person at a time. So vehicles are being made under light truck laws for mass consumption so that everybody can have one. I think they're selling them like they were selling cigarettes in the '50s, like SUVs are the perfect lifestyle. For me that's totally wrong.

What were people's reactions to this exhibit?

[There were] two extremes. Some people were so proud of this work being in a public space and [felt] it was a very important and very political thing. On the other hand, some people were more shocked, saying that it was against the US, against Americans, against business. ¶ *Attack #9* is an anti-capitalist statement; it is artwork that says "consume less." Oil kills because we are so dependent on it, because we need



so much energy. We consume so much that we need to go to war . . . to be sure that we have a hand on this oil. But if we had cars that were as efficient as in Europe, we wouldn't need to import all this oil so there wouldn't be a war.

All of your projects are taken into the streets, and ATSA often associates itself with the idea of transforming the urban landscape. What does that expression mean to you?

When you go in the streets, you always know what you're going to see. But when we did *Attention: Zone Epineuse* and put those yellow ribbons around the trees, this transformation made people call city [officials], afraid that the trees were going to be cut. So it made them really react. That's what we mean, we transform the picture enough so people will react to it. We create something that forms a question.

And what kind of action do you hope to inspire in people when they encounter an ATSA project?

A sense of power in their day-to-day life—that they can do something, that they do not have to be puppets to the way the world is organized. They can be critical about what's around them and try to make little changes one gesture at a time to make the world a better place to live. ¶ We also want to make it possible to turn around the corner and see something extraordinary. I like that a city where a lot of people live can be a place where art is present. ¶ I want people to break consensus—the consensus that has a lot of power now that says consume, consume, consume.

Does the use of the word "terrorism" in your name ever lead to misunderstandings?

Of course. We gave ourselves that name in 1997, but it has a stronger and more violent meaning now because we experienced it nearer. At the same time, we think it's more and more a title that is meaningful, because people who have the power in this world are responsible for a lot of violence and a lot of disrespect to nature. So it is important that this word is not only their property. It has to be also taken in an abstract way. We're making creations that accuse, and surprise, as they appear in day-to-day life in a place where you did not see something as an art piece before. It's a

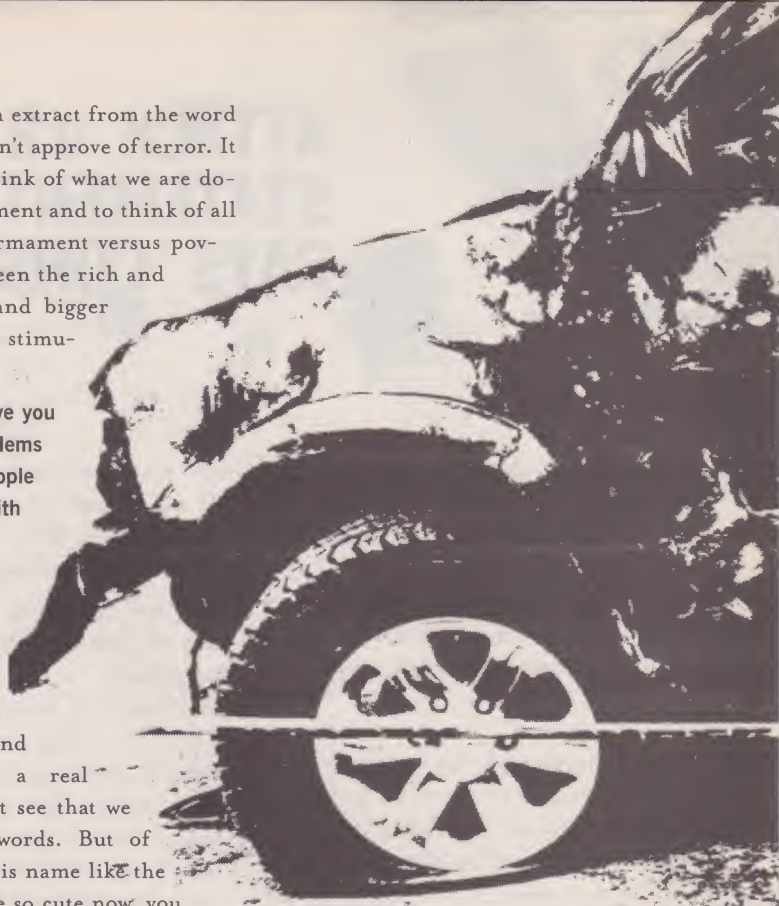
concept that we can extract from the word "terrorism." We don't approve of terror. It terrorizes me to think of what we are doing to the environment and to think of all that we put into armament versus poverty. The gap between the rich and poor gets bigger and bigger every year and this stimulates violence.

Terrorism, aside, have you ever had serious problems with police or people who didn't agree with your statements?

No. There was [an] e-mail once from someone who was really shocked by our name. I think she was Israeli [and had] experienced a real bomb. She couldn't see that we were playing on words. But of course if we had this name like the "rebels" it would be so cute now, you know? Before words like "guerilla" and "revolution" had strength, but now they are sweet. But what is really making people afraid now is terrorism, and that's why we're taking this word. Why should artists have to take a lesser word? This is now, this is the reality of revolution.

You're right about certain words being cute: "Revolution" is sold as a product now. It's marketed and packaged. Do you think that sets a mentality in people that change isn't possible?

Yes, the marketing world is using [this word] a lot now. Everybody wants to be a revolutionary. I think we have this feeling of powerlessness, but if you think about it a little bit more, it can't be true, because as a consumer you have a lot of power. You have a choice—you buy it or you don't buy it. And if this product doesn't satisfy some of your values, you leave it behind. Like when I'm out of milk and the store beside my home doesn't have bio milk, and my little boy needs milk, well I'm going to have to buy this milk anyway. But next time I go shopping, I can buy extra bio milk to make sure I always have enough. So it's not true that we don't have the power to choose products that are organic or fair trade. You have the choice to buy local. You have choices



**ACTS
TERRORIST
ACCEPTABLE
SOCIALY**

ATTACK #9 IS AN ANTI-CAPITALIST STATEMENT; IT IS ARTWORK THAT SAYS "CONSUME LESS."

ATSA

présente/présents + associe
The Theatre Centre, Saw Video and Galerie Saw Gallery

in your life everyday, and of course it's not always possible to live that way, but you try. We are animals, we are made to consume and pollute, but we have a choice on how much we do that. There is a big machine trying to make you not have this choice, and it's true that people feel that their little actions will not make a difference. We live in this individualist context that doesn't always make you feel that you're part of a critical mass or community. So that's why I think it's important to do art in the streets because art brings this elan, a spring, a 'woo,' a motivation, a feeling. And that's another thing why it's important: to make people feel like a part of this big community sense and to make choices that are thoughtful of this community.

So what is it about consumerism that controls us so much that we have this feeling of helplessness?

It's a system. We look at the TV, and we are brainwashed by publicity and images of facelifts and constantly changing ourselves. We are living in a fake world of Viagra and pharmaceutical industries that tell us we have to be young all the time. It's OK to get old. I think we valorize youth so much that people can't really accept that time passes and that not everything is perfect. We let industry decide what comes into our homes, but people are accomplices to all of these things because they buy.

Do your personal lifestyle choices reflect ATSA's work?

As much as we can. Every time we do a project, [Pierre and I] learn something, because we're artists before we are activists. We research each subject and learn a lot of things. With *Parc Industriel*, I wasn't composting before, but when we did this project we learned so much and now we com-

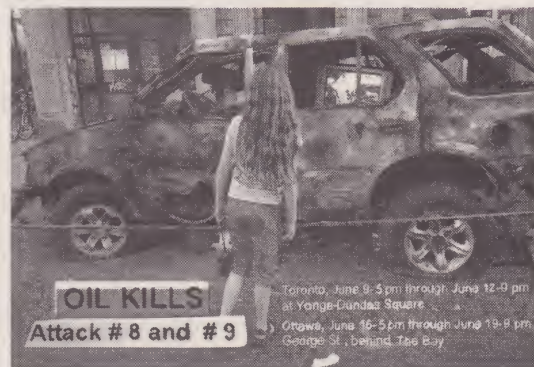
post. Every time we do a project it changes the way we live, it's something that never gets out of you. All of our real life is connected with our message.

You have two young kids—two and six years old. Are they being raised with these same values?

They know what we do very much. It's kind of difficult to make sure kids don't get extreme, like my girl who points at every SUV saying "that's a bad car, that's a bad car." [Laughs.] So sometimes it's a bit simplistic for kids, but at the same time, they learn to respect the environment, that everybody is a person.... With all our projects, they are with us a lot of the time and they learn a lot by listening to what we say. ¶ Of course, as time goes on, they'll have their own opinions and maybe they'll help us or maybe they'll completely go the other way. [Laughs.] I don't know what's going to happen then.

How can people get involved with ATSA, or what can they do on their own to start making small differences?

We use volunteers in the Montreal area. It's a nonprofit organization, so donations are always very welcome. It's also important for us to feel that when someone gives a donation to us, it's more than money; it's says they support what we do and it gives us a lot of energy to continue. ¶ There are a lot of ways people can get started on making a change. Live near work so you can walk or ride your bike instead of driving. Bring your own bag when you're out shopping. Encourage local products instead of huge chains. Of course, recycle and compost. Composting is very easy, especially when you live in the suburbs and you have a yard. But you can also compost on balconies. Every time we take an action that goes towards the changing of mentality, that's a step forward. Remember that politicians



ATTENTION! Une intervention dont la violence accuse l'industrie pétrolière et automobile, les consommateurs et les gouvernements et informe des effets pervers de notre hyper dépendance à l'or noir. **ATTACK** est explosive, graphiquement violent, work serving as an indictment of the oil and auto industries, government and rampant consumerism; it will heighten public awareness of the perverse effects of our overdependence on the "black gold".

Qu'en pensez-vous? / What do you think?

receive a lot of lobbying from the industry, and as long as mentalities don't change in a big way, I think there are some decisions they won't have the courage to take.

What do you think is in the future for us? Will things get better as far as mass consumerism, or worse?

I think the world goes toward positive things in certain areas, but at the same time, we are always looking toward facility. So many products are on the market that shouldn't even exist. Industry is always thinking of having a bigger market and producing at a lower price without having social responsibility. We are living in a world that is searching for fast profits more than quality or longevity. I think we'll have no choice but to make good decisions at one point, but it's always when we're hitting the wall that decisions are taken by the government. How late is it going to be? It's already very late. ©



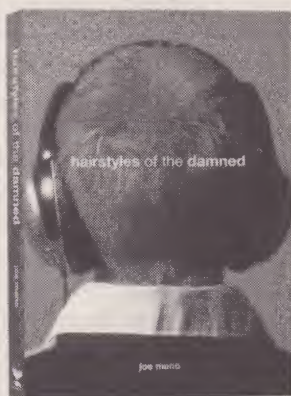
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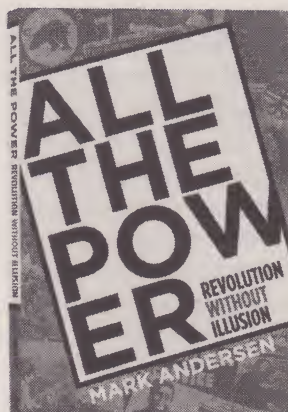
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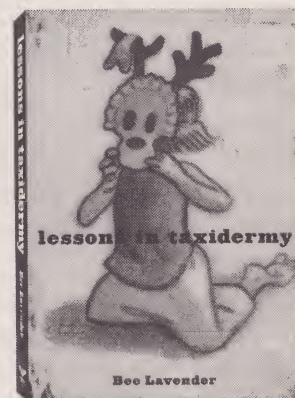
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It's rare these days for me to get that feeling. You know, the one you get when you see a band and something happens in your gut—a nervous uncertainty that what you're seeing and hearing can't be that fucking good because it just doesn't seem possible. Then, the set is over and it was that fucking good and something in you has permanently changed for the better. The first time I saw the Dream is Dead was along with a few other brave souls who stuck around to see an out-of-town band take on the unfortunate task of headlining a mostly local basement show. You ever see the graphic on the cover of that movie *Scanners*? That was me. A dedicated fan ever since, I've followed what is easily one of the most underrated bands in hardcore today with a fury. My passion for following their release schedule is nothing compared to the band's music, though. "Intense" is an understatement. With lyrics like "Fuck this shithole country," and "This is for the real kids / the ones to whom this shit will always fucking matter," you know they're not fucking around. Barging out of Indianapolis, Indiana, with little regard for whose toes they step on, I was fortunate enough to talk with acclaimed young author award recipient and the Dream is Dead vocalist Clark Giles about not only his band, but why he's so fucking pissed off all the goddamn fucking time. Fuck.

Interview by **Dave Hofer**

Photographs by **Angie Taksony**

What was your first exposure to music? Not necessarily punk rock, but your first exposure to any popular music.

Well, the first 7" I ever bought was a Davey Crockett *King of the Wild Frontier* Disney 7". I rocked that for a little while, but then I mostly just listened to old rock'n'roll that my dad had. He was into old Johnny Cash and Chuck Berry and old do-wop and '50s rock. I always liked that better than the crap that my mom liked, which was like Crystal Gale. My mom and I get along much better as people, but my dad and I have a better connection with music. ¶ But, when I was 10, I saw *Star Trek IV* and there was that scene with that punk rocker that Spock ends up giving the Vulcan neck grab to. When I heard the band playing on

the punk's radio, I was like, "That's what I like. That's the music I like. I need to find more stuff like this." That's pretty much what put me on the path to hell.

So once you saw Spock put out this dude on the bus, how did you continue to find punk?

Do you remember that old sitcom show *Mama's Family*? There was this horrible episode where they have this punk-rock prom, but they ended up inviting all these people from the '30s or something and it ends up being this World War II swing-dance thing. I remember that my mom looked at me while we were watching that show and she was like, "If you ever become one of those people, I will disown you." That set it in stone. Back then, I thought that "punk rocker" was a job you could do, like an accountant. Obviously I was a very naive youth. I thought, "This is totally awesome, I love this music, I'm just going to be a punk rocker for the rest of my life." In junior high I saved up my money, didn't eat lunch, and bought the Dead Kennedys *In God We Trust, Inc.* on cassette, and it's been a steady ball of shit and destruction from then on.

Why do you think punk appealed to you so much at such a young age?

It's always seemed like it's been this ingrown thing in me. I went to Catholic school even though my parents weren't even Catholic, which made little sense. I remember sitting there in like first grade being like, "This is all bullshit." ¶ It was strange, because my parents used to own their own business, and up until I was 11 or 12 I would have considered us to be upper-middle class. Then my parents got divorced, and it was a total pendulum swing because my mom and I were basically homeless and living out of a car for two years. I think that gave me a real unique perspective in a weird way, because it made me really start thinking about topics like economics, or welfare or politics in general—things I never had to think about before. It was the music I loved coupled with issues that affected me. They were issues you don't have to think about when you're a rich kid. ¶ I think it's half genetics and half being sold the American dream of the nuclear family: the mom and dad that'll

love each other forever and you'll grow up and get married and have kids of your own and the process repeats itself. Somewhere in my formative years that whole train got derailed. Going from a nice house where I'm eating a nice meal every night to being homeless and my mom working three jobs and we're scraping by for change and having to lie about where I live to stay in school with my friends, I think that put me down that path.

Did you have an apartment, or did you really live in a car for two years?

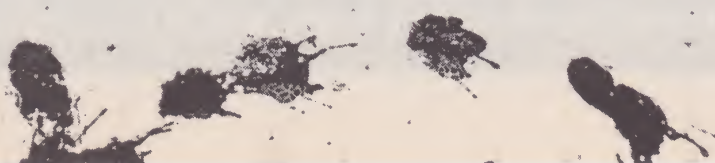
Well, we lived in a car for usually a month at a time. We ended up moving in with my mom's boyfriend at the time who was Iranian. I grew up for three years in a Persian household—they were all ex-patriots from when the Shah got overthrown—so that was really strange. So it was really strange to go from this white-bread existence to scraping by in a studio apartment and living in a car and then suddenly we're living in this ex-patriots place. They were some of the nicest people I've ever met.

Do you think that the fact that you lived for three years with Iranian ex-patriots might have something to do with your outlook?

Possibly. They never really talked about politics, but I remember I was living there when the Ayatollah Khomeini died and they had a huge party. I was like 14 and I don't think they thought I had an interest in politics, so they didn't engage me or talk to me about it. I found it interesting and asked questions when I could. I still find Persia an interesting topic. It's one of my little pet topics that I like to read about and keep up on. I never really had a long, political discourse with them about it. After all, I was a zitty kid with half my head shaved and a Vision Street Wear shirt on. I'm sure they didn't take me that seriously.

So when did you really get seriously into punk rock?

In junior high and high school, it was a lot like that movie *Suburbia*. My mom had to work a few jobs, so she was never around. I was the total definition of a latchkey kid, and I started hanging out with the punk-rock kids. You had your skinheads, your punks, your metalheads. We all hung out together and we'd go to shows. I was re-



THE DREAM IS DEAD





I DON'T WANT TO SIT HERE

AND SAY THAT I'M PERFECT.
MAYBE IT'S JUST THE FACT
THAT I DIDN'T HAVE SUCH

OPTIONS PRESENTED TO ME WHEN I WAS 21. NOW I'M 29 AND I SEE
HOW THIS SCENE WORKS.

ally lucky that in Indianapolis we've always had a great scene. It waxes and wanes, of course, but there's always been a large contingent of older punks and metalheads that have stuck around and taken kids under their wings. I remember when I wrote a letter to Sloppy Seconds when I was like 14 and they were like, "Hey come over to our house and drink beer!" Granted, that's probably not the most responsible thing, but it was something that made me discover that these were bands that actually wanted to hang out with me, and aren't up on this big stage and will talk to me like I'm a human being. ¶ I put my first show together when I was 15. It was a total failure, but it was still cool. Steve Dujinski ran this place called the Sitcom and he was my age. He was bringing bands though at the time, and I was like, "How are you doing this? Why would these bands even come here and play?" And he was like, "I just write them." That was such an amazing thing. I fell in love with the scene and just wanted to be in it more and more. It was so different than any other scene out there that I had read about or seen on the news. It was like love at first sight.

Did you have someone that took you under their wing?

I was the shy kid that didn't talk very much, so I was the dude that was the accessory, the wingman. I would go and hang out at these dudes' houses and they'd be like, "Have you heard of this band?" And they'd play the record and be like, "Come out to this show, it'll be awesome!" My mom always had to work and I had nothing else to do, so I figured I might as well do that.

As you've gotten older, have you had any younger kids that you've done the same thing to?

For sure. I try to give back as much as I can. I do the local hardcore website here in town, Indianapolishardcore.com. I try to make every other release on my record label an Indiana band. I just really try to push the scene here. It's not an exaggeration to say that punk rock saved my life. I was so miserable because I had so much when I was young and then to suddenly have nothing, it was just such a miserable existence. Without the outlet that punk rock gave me, I probably would have become a criminal or something.

When did you decide to start a band?

I've always been the type of person to just go and do something if I think I can do it. With punk, part of its blessing and its curse is that anyone can do it. I mean, the drummer of Transgression at the time was only 13. I would see all of these bands that would tour through town that had band members that were younger than me, and I was just like, "There is no reason I cannot be doing this."

What made you want to be the singer?

I hate being the singer, actually. In most of my older bands I would try to play bass because that's what I like. I don't consider myself a true musician. I'm a punk bass player. I can play the songs, but it's not Rush. Most bands I've ever been in have been with guys that are pretty good musicians, so I feel pretty stupid playing bass when the other guys can do syncopated rhythms and are just talking some lan-

guage I don't even understand. So instead I'm like, "Well, guess I'll just scream into the mic like a dumbass monkey. Like a hairless ape and stomp around like a gorilla and scream." They're like, "Cool." Plus, people have always been like, "We like the lyrics you write," or "We like what you stand for and you talk well between songs." I've always ended up being the singer by accident.

How did you get started writing?

I won a young author's award when I was in first grade. I wrote this stupid book called *The Cat Who Craved Computers*. It was about this cat who started ordering things online while the family was away, and he started ordering all of these goldfish to his house. Totally living high off the hog. This was before the Internet or anything, so I'm like a visionary. At the end he gets busted and all of his stuff gets taken away but they don't catch him. I ended up winning first place in my school district and ever since then I was like, "Well, I'd like to be a writer! That'd be cool!" I figured that would be my backup deal if this whole punk-rock thing didn't work out. That was awesome for my parents: "So you're doing this punk-rock thing, what's your backup plan?" "Oh, I'm going to be a writer!" They loved that.

So what was the progression from *The Cat Who Craved Computers* to social commentary in punk lyrics? How do you get from point A to point B?

I hate to say it, but it probably involved some really bad poetry. I'm sure in some English class we had to write some stupid poetry and I listened to Crass and thought

that I was going to write something really blasphemous like that. I'm sure it involves some really horrible stuff on a notebook somewhere that I'd prefer to forget about.

I would love to hear some examples of that stuff.

I can tell you that's *not* going to happen. But I do remember the first poem I wrote when I was like 12 was called "Black Thoughts." I don't remember how it goes, but I'm sure it was fucking horrible. Probably something like "death" and "breath."

What made you start the Dream is Dead?

Me and the dude that put the band together, Jason McCash, we were both at a point in our lives where we were just jaded with the scene as a whole. There were all of these bands coming out on hardcore and punk labels, but they were really just cock-rock bands. They were just aping all of the excesses of the '80s and had the most vapid lyrics. They were dudes in makeup and these faux-lesbian album covers. It was pretentious shit. We were both just really sick of it and feeling nihilistic about everything. The Dream is Dead was supposed to start out as like a Murder City Devils type thing—just a nihilistic rock'n'roll band—but we couldn't really get it together how we wanted it to sound. One day we wrote a hardcore song and were like, "Well, get in where you fit in. This is what we do, this is who we are. We're still going to be nihilistic, but let's just make the band the most pissed-off, political, fuck-you band that's the total opposite of what was out there."

Do you feel like you've helped anything? It seems like things really have gotten worse since then.

Oh, yeah. It has. I think we're at that boiling point now where there just needs to be three or four bands that need to stand up and be like, "This is fucking *bullshit*. Listen to fucking Iron Maiden, drink some whiskey, fuck all these people, and fuck all this image bullshit."

When I think of "image" in music, I think of an R&B singer that maybe has a little talent but is mostly just a pretty face to sell records. It seems like that's what a lot of these bands are now: good-looking guys that want teenage girls to buy their records.

There are bands now that are getting signed that have never played outside their hometown. They haven't been in a van and suffered. They don't know what it's like to play to five rednecks in some bar in Texas that want to *kill* you. I think that bands need that experience to be able to hack it on the road in the long term. Now I think labels see four guys—or the coveted three guys and girl bass player—and they're like, "Well, all of these people are marginally attractive individuals with cool hairstyles, or we can make them that way," and they sign them on that aspect alone. Bands get totally fucked where they get these horrible deals where they just make money for the labels. The scene right now is like the Emperor Has No Clothes—this total sham moving forward when they all know how stupid it is underneath. Labels keep hiring these PR firms and trying to do these strategic partnerships because they think that's what everyone else is doing. There are all these managers and middlemen involved and someone needs to stand up and say it's bullshit, you're not going to sell more than 10,000 records ever, it's punk rock and fucking *enjoy* it for what it is.

How did the Dream is Dead manage to avoid that sort of stuff?

I don't want to sit here and say that I'm perfect. Maybe it's just the fact that I didn't have such options presented to me when I was 21. Now I'm 29 and I see how this scene works. I've done zines, I've played in bands, I've put out records, I've put on shows. I've experienced every aspect and feel I understand how the scene works. Maybe I would have been that same dipshit at 21. I think it's just a matter of doing your research, talking to people that are older in the scene and getting their opinions about stuff and staying true to your ethics. The path to compromise is such a slippery slope . . . once you start going down it it's hard to go back. I've been blessed that everyone in the band has been on the same page since the beginning. Look, we play blasting political hardcore, we're never going to have a sing-songy part, there's a glass ceiling as to how high we can go. We're never going to win a Grammy, we couldn't even be like Metallica if we wanted to be. We're probably going to sell, in the best of all pos-

sible worlds, 10,000 copies per record. If that's the music you love to do and you know that's your glass ceiling, you might as well say "Fuck it" and go all out, piss everyone off and burn every bridge you can. It's pretty much a scorched-earth policy.

You're turning 30 soon. How do you feel about aging gracefully with those kinds of politics?

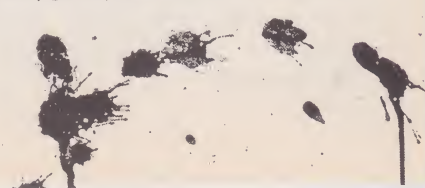
In a weird way, being older gives you a lot more freedom. I've got a job that I can go to, I have a house I can live in. It's not like my life is going to be unfulfilled if I don't sell 100,000 records. When you're an independent person and not depending on all these record sales to keep your band going or to make your girlfriend stay with you or whatever, it gives you freedom.

That's true, but do you think that when you're 35 or 40 years old you're going to be able to keep giving back to the scene in ways other than giving your money at the door?

Being an older punk rocker or hardcore dude and having more of the resources of the adult world, like a higher paying job or more of a knowledge of business, helps to get a show space or open a punk-rock bar or put out more records and have them distributed. I think that's how older punks can contribute. They have resources of the adult world that an 18-year-old living with his parents isn't going to have.

How do you avoid the trap of being the punk rocker that gets that job with all the best intentions and just gets consumed by work or marriage and then sells people like me and you their old records?

Well, I've managed to avoid it so far! It's scary. Probably once a year, I'll go through this crisis where I'm like, "Goddamn. I'm almost 30; I've thrown away one or two relationships that probably could have worked out to go play in a band; I've spent so much money on putting out these records, will anyone even give a shit in 10 years? Blah blah blah." Probably once a year I *do* want to quit, but fuck it—I'm not going to let the bastards drag me down that way. I think about it for about a week and then I get the next record back from the plant and hold it in my hand and I'm just like, "Fuck it. This is worth every penny." ©



Marcel Dzama



People in this place have animal heads: they are part of a long parade. Some of them look startled, some of them are jumping. The forests here have forlorn faces: in their spiny limbs are pouting girls in grey dresses and punctured, sad-eyed ghosts. Flowers bloom with skulls all in the lower branches. Up ahead, five stern soldiers in brown, one with a charming bicycle, point angry at a comrade who has a tree for a head.

Like a limb-shaped island on a beautifully uncertain map, the work of visual artist Marcel Dzama is a world unto itself. With drawings and paintings shown in galleries throughout the world, his intricate, strange animal-headed figures and frowning trees have also been immortalized in a number of popular art books, literary magazines, and most recently, on the record covers of Beck, *They Might Be Giants*, and the *Weakerthans*.

Though his drawn characters are entirely recognizable, Dzama's work is always challenging and can even be gruesome: menacing soldiers sometimes march among dismembered limbs. The juxtaposition of childhood fantasies and adult nightmares provokes an immediate dream-like state, where like the best art work in any medium, the audience is left deeply wondering. Dzama's new collection of work, the book *826 for 826*, is an anthology of his progression as a visual artist, the proceeds of which will benefit the charitable literacy organization 826 started by McSweeney's editor, Dave Eggers. A young man, 31 years old at the time of this interview, Marcel Dzama has done what few modern painters have: bridge the insular, self-reflexive world of fine art with the world the rest of us inhabit.

Interview by Joe Meno

You grew up in Manitoba but just moved to NYC. How do you like living in the metropolis?

It's great. Everything's so close by, all the

museums and record stores and art galleries. And the weather's much nicer.

I hate to say it but the only thing I know about Winnipeg comes from the Weakerthans' song, "I hate Winnipeg." I don't think that is an accurate portrait.

It's a little bit like a pitiful version of Chicago. A Canadian version. There are a half a million people there but it's the coldest place for the amount of population that it has. It's actually colder than Siberia.

Does it say that on the license plates?

No, it says "Friendly Manitoba."

Is there anything about growing up in Winnipeg that impacted the development of your art?

The isolation makes you more self-reliant on your own imagination or will to do things on your own. A lot of bands come out of Winnipeg because there's not as much to do there. There's a lot of time when you're stuck inside. There's a lot of snow.

Is that why you started drawing and painting?

I've always been doing it. I think it's a good reason why I was more productive than if I was in a busy city. In grade seven or something, I'd make up my own comic books. They were usually based on what was popular in comic books at the time. The bad versions of *X-Men* or *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. There was one based on the plush toys I had, like my teddy bear and this weird cat that was green and that had a beret on.

The cat with the beret was the hero of the comic?

Yeah. The villains were usually based on goofy kids.

And *Cat with a Beret* never caught on?

No, I guess not.

So early on, you were more influenced by pop

art than other kinds of visual art?

My parents used to read Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* to me. That book really stuck with me because I have a lot of monsters that look like that even.

In a couple of your paintings, there are characters in boats heading to unknown, other worlds, reminiscent of the boy who discovers the land of monsters in *Where the Wild Things Are*.

Yeah, they're kind of going off to that island.

Did those strange unknown worlds begin to appear in the work you were doing early on?

Not really. I started painting in high school. Picasso mixed with surrealism, basically the first art you begin to notice in high school. I was in a few bands, playing guitar and singing, at the same time. My uncle, who's a year younger than me, Neil Farber, and me played music together. So I would make these drawings for the cassette tapes of our music. I'd make these comic books with the lyrics, like a booklet. I'd cut open cereal boxes and use the inside, which was blank, and I'd draw on top of that and make these little clay sculptures and put it all inside the cassette. I'd put all the prizes inside of it and people would buy the tapes for the stuff and maybe listen to the music. It was fun doing music but it was also a good reason to do art. And then we could sell it for more.

From those early collaborations in high school with art and music, you went to form the Royal Art Lodge, an arts collective, at university.

We were all art-school students at university in early 1996, and we'd get together every Sunday and later every Wednesday. We'd get together and make drawings and music. We'd do a drawing: I'd start it by



Untitled, 2005
Ink and watercolor on paper, 14" x 11"

H. C. 1984



Untitled, 2005
Ink and watercolor on paper, 14" x 11"

drawing a character and pass it to someone else and they'd add another character or a background and it would change the whole idea of what it was about.

Like the Surrealists' exquisite corpse?

Yeah. We started the Royal Art Lodge because we were all socially awkward. We didn't go to bars and drink or anything.

I keep a sketchbook of ideas, things that catch my eye. When I'm drifting off to sleep, a lot of ideas come from that moment when you're not quite asleep but almost asleep.

When we got together, we didn't really know what to do. We don't really talk very much either. We'd just draw and that'd spark something. Usually, Michael Dumontier would bring some interesting music and usually Neil Farber and I would bring some music we had made. We listened to more avant-garde music, kind of punk, but not really, like Yoko Ono. I usually brought Woodie Guthrie and Leadbelly but none really liked it. Altogether there were seven people involved in the Royal Art Lodge when it started. Now there's

three. Everybody moved. So now there's Michael Dumontier and Neil Farber and me. I've been sending drawings in the mail and when I go there I draw with them.

When did you make the decision to pursue your visual art instead of your music?

I guess after high school. I still kept bands going, but just as a hobby. I knew I wasn't

very good at it. I don't really have a good singing voice. But I didn't ever think I would be able to make a living at painting. I had a few plans. My grandparents live in a small town outside of Winnipeg and I was thinking of becoming a farm hand on their farm. You can buy a house there for like a thousand dollars. So the plan was to finish university, go there, make paintings, while I was a farmhand.

Are you a rugged kind of guy, Marcel?

Oh no, totally not. But it was a back-up



Untitled, 2005
Ink and watercolor on paper, 14" x 11"

plan. I figured I wouldn't have to work too hard because he was my grandpa. He wasn't going to fire me.

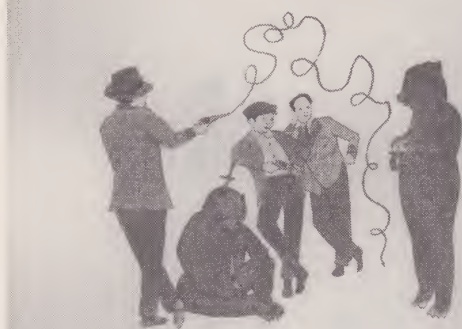
How did you avoid that plan?

There's a gallery in Winnipeg called the Plug-In gallery and my professor showed the curator there some of my work and they gave me my first show. I was 22. I was very lucky because I don't think my back-up plan was all that good. After that, I was asked to show with three other artists from Winnipeg in an LA gallery. After that, the LA gallery asked to represent me. I thought it might have been just a one-time thing. I always have low expectations of everything.

You have a lot of reoccurring images in your work: ghosts, people with animal heads, trees with faces. How long have you been exploring those visual ideas?

I keep a sketchbook of ideas, things that catch my eye. When I'm drifting off to sleep, a lot of ideas come from that moment when you're not quite asleep but almost asleep. When I dream and wake up, if I don't write the idea down, I'll totally forget it. I used to get these weird nightmares of these horse-headed characters. I don't know what those represented. They were





Untitled, 2005
Ink and watercolor on paper, 14" x 11"

usually chasing me or dancing. They were way too realistic in my dream, with like an actual horse-head. And they were a little bit bigger than me, too. ¶ Another one I had was these weird cloud characters. In the dream, they weren't really clouds, they were enlarged people, like puffy, almost swollen. But I think I had that dream when I had a fever. I made them more of clouds when I drew them. ¶ Also, I'd always go to the farm when I was kid. My grandparents had a farm and my cousins had a farm and there'd always be bears and deer. There's something drawing animals that I can use to bring out a personality than when I draw human characters. I've met a lot of people that have less personality than some ideas.

You have a really consistent color palette from your drawings to your paintings.

Muted colors or military-looking colors.

And one of those colors comes from actual root beer. How did you begin to use root beer as paint?

I was making root beer at my grandparent's place. There's this syrup you can buy at this old general store there. It was like a little glass container that made a gallon of

root beer. Anyways, I spilled the syrup on my sketchbook and it dried really nicely. It was more like an ink, with a kind of glow or shine to it. I was fooling around with it, using it as paint with a fork. It was a lot cheaper than paint. I kind of like using different things than the other students were using at art school. I'd mix things into my paint and do dumb experiments with like toothpaste and shampoo, just to see how they would dry. I still use the root beer. I still haven't been able to find a brown watercolor that could replace it.

Did you use root beer on the cover of the Weakerthans's *Deconstruction Site*?

Any brown is root beer. So any of the brown bears on there are root beer.

Had you grown up a fan of John Solomon from his days in Propagandi?

They were the best Winnipeg band. My wife and I would go and see them all the time. She worked at a record store and introduced me to the Weakerthans. John let me open for them a couple times with my band, Albatross Note. It started off as a kind of joke band. I had my little sister in it. She was 11 and we'd do Yoko Ono covers. So I'd become friends with the guys in



Untitled, 2005
Ink and watercolor on paper, 14" x 11"

Weakerthans and John asked if I'd do the cover and I said, "I would be honored to."

Since then, your work—although you started out in fine art—has appeared in some pretty popular venues.

I'd do stuff with *McSweeney's* magazine and a book of drawings in a limited edition for Nick Hornby's charity for multiple sclerosis.

***McSweeney's* is putting out your new book and the sales are going to benefit the 826 reading initiative started by Dave Eggers.**

Yeah, it's called *826 for 826*. It's going to be 826 drawings and all the money will go to 826. It's going to drawings, some stuff from older work that I did, and do as many new drawings that I can. It's more of an anthology, starting from my earliest work, and has as much new work as possible.

Most recently, you did Beck's new record cover for his album, *Guero*.

Beck said he actually bought a drawing of mine at my first show in L.A. Beck knew the curator who gave me my first show, because of his grandfather, who's also an artist, Al Hansen. He does these figurative forms, made from cigarettes glued together. ¶ Originally, Beck wanted me to do





Untitled, 2005
Ink and watercolor on paper, 14" x 11"



Untitled, 2005
Ink and watercolor on paper, 14" x 11"

a video for a song on his new album, so I drew up a storyboard. When I sent him the storyboard, he said he wanted to use it for the album. I asked if I could do some more work on it first. So he sent me the album before it was released and I got to listen to it and do some drawings while I was listening to it. I never took any of the lyrics but I wanted to get the feeling of the album in the pictures.

Had you been a fan of Beck's music?

Actually, I had quite a few of his albums. I was a big fan of *One Foot in the Grave* and *Stereophonic Soul Manure*. That song "Rowboat" sounds like a really old country song.

Now you have your work in galleries on both coasts, collected in art books, and appearing on the record covers of pop music.

I was really surprised when they asked for it for the cover because I thought it was going to go inside. There was another image they were considering for the cover. I was really happy but I've been trying to stick to the fine art category more. I would gladly do a record cover for another musician I like. I always love the Sonic Youth covers. But most of musical heroes are old. I would gladly do a Neil Young or Leonard Cohen

or Bob Dylan cover. I'd gladly do another Weakerthans cover.

But in complete opposition to your fine art work, you have your own action figures.

It's something I've always dreamed of since I was a child. I was obsessed with Star Wars action figures. The film came out pretty much when I was born. I don't remember not having Star Wars. From age five to 10, when I felt awkward that I was still playing with them, I always had action figures. My parents used to buy me figures that weren't Star Wars toys, like the fake versions which were a few dollars cheaper. They had these glow-in-the-dark body parts that were interesting. But mostly, they were kind of dumb-looking: like dinosaur-heads on top of regular bodies. They had stickers on their chest instead of being painted and instead of light sabers, they had like a light-saber bat. ¶ I met this person Larry Engel, who was in charge of the Cerealart company, who was making limited edition sculptures from different artists. I had actually made some fake action figures when I was in the Art Lodge. We'd take apart an old dollar-store action figure, then paint on top of it, alter the figure, make a new

plasticine head, and name it after some character we had been drawing. So it was a weird dream that I always had, doing an action figure, which Cerealart put out in a limited edition.

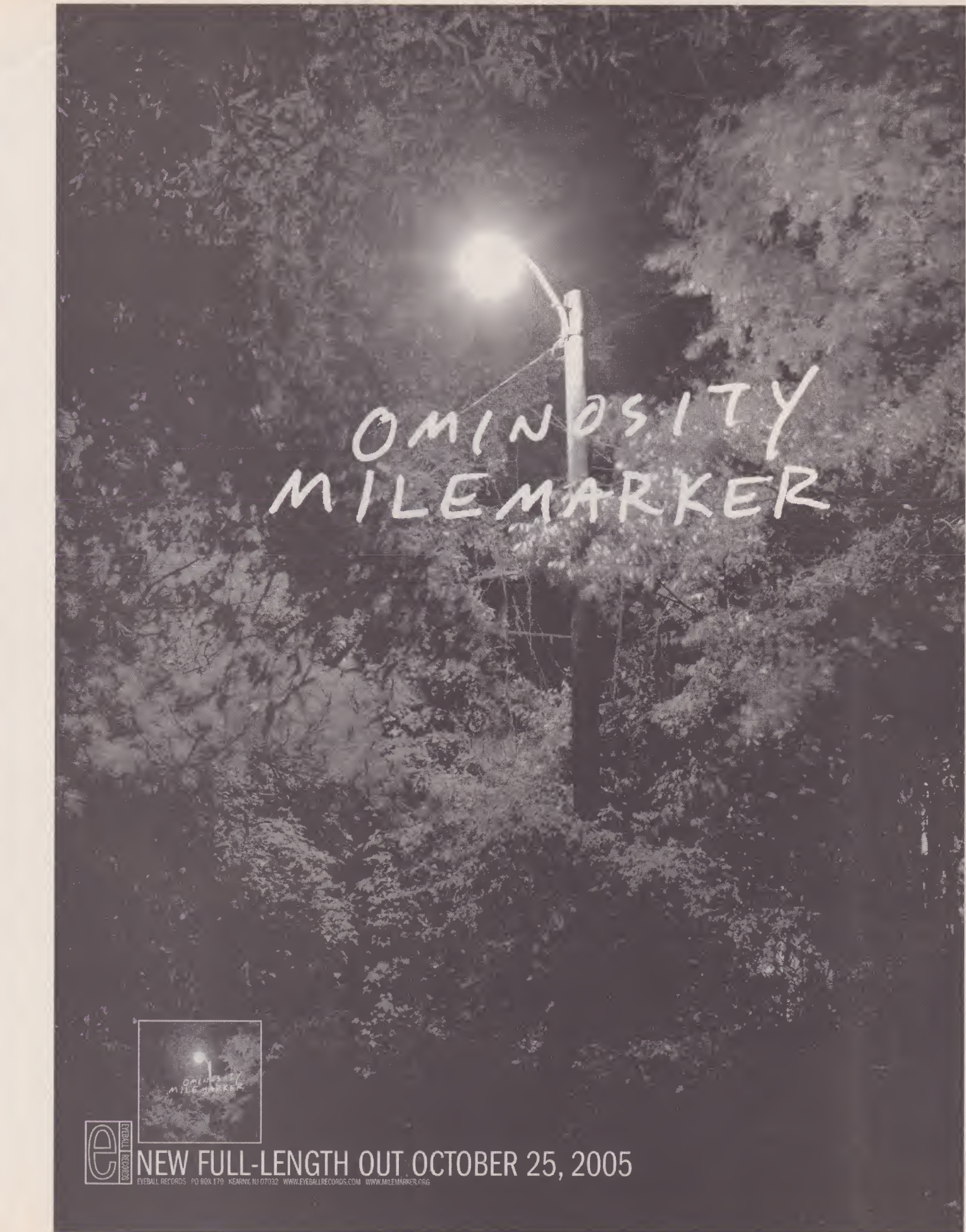
What are you working on now?

I'm working on a show for a gallery here in New York. I'm actually doing some sculptures for it. I used to make this short live-action films with costumes, kind of like my drawings. I'd make the costumes and have people act in them. They were silent because sound is a lot harder to manage and it's instantly more arty if it's silent. I guess I always picture my drawings as silent movies for some reason. They have that old quality to them. So now I've been making these costumes from papier mache without making the movies. I made this tree-man costume and I'm most happy with that one. You have to crawl inside it. Your legs stick out when you walk around in it.

Where else can we expect to see your work? It seems like it's everywhere. Where else would you like to see your drawings appear?

I'd like to have my own brand of root beer. ©





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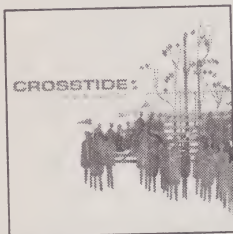
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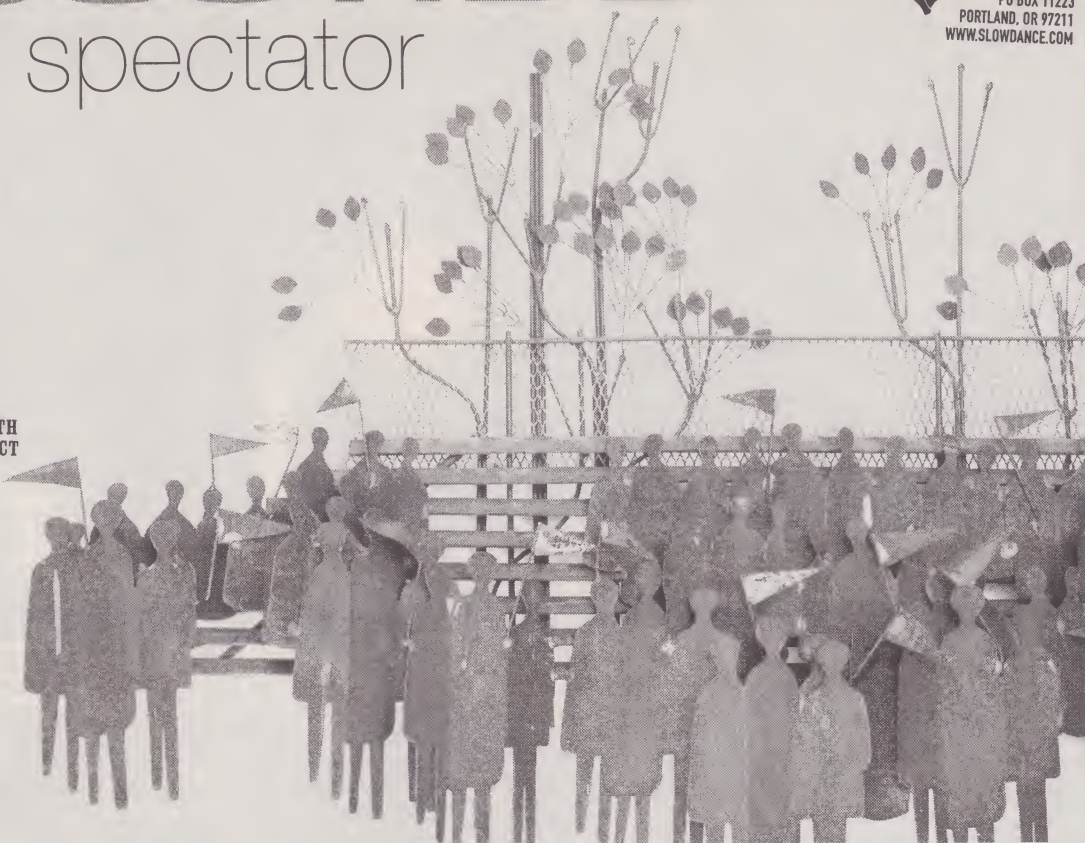


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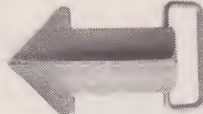
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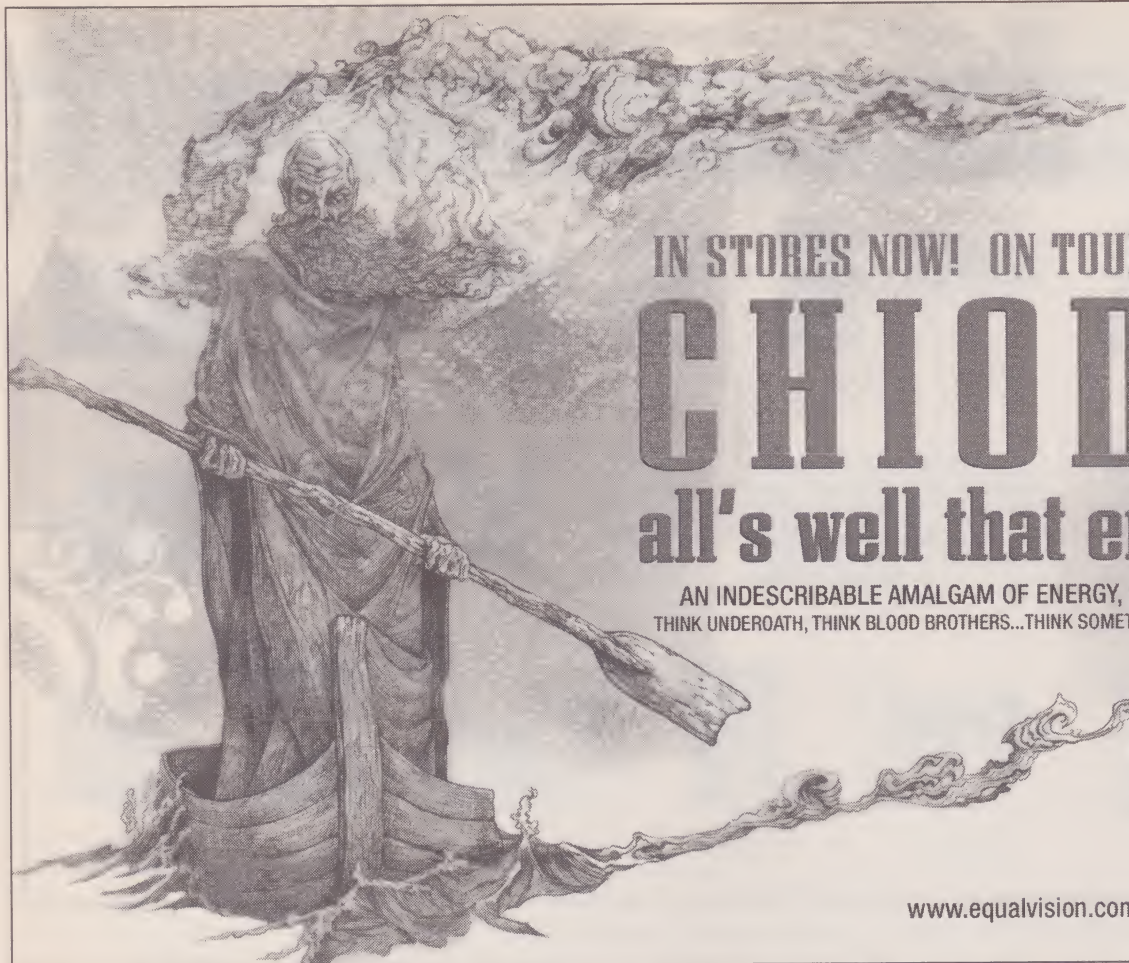


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BLACK MARI

Always on the search for new ways of selling their products, it was inevitable that marketers and PR maven would discover the underground arts scene. But is the scene's willingness to exploit itself the real major threat?

By Anne Elizabeth Moore Illustrations by Leah Hayes / leahhayes.com

“We thought it would be a great way to reach out to our fans, especially ones that are into underground street culture and music,” Bonnie Burton—zinester, writer, and Lucasfilm, Ltd. employee—tells me about the street art promotional campaign she helped commandeer for *Star Wars III: Revenge of the Sith*. The posters, stencils, pinbacks, avatars, and stickers Burton helped distribute and popularize were only part of the campaign that made this episode of the series unapologetically ubiquitous last summer, even if you were a committed member of the underground, exclusively dedicated to DIY media. “It’s great to gain awareness from zines and such that usually get ignored by other film houses and media outlets,” Burton concludes.

She’s right, of course: zines, stencils, and wheatpasted posters are a great way to reach out to the underground. That’s why we use them, here in the underground. That the Star Wars promotions team would feel comfortable misappropriating these methods, despite its dedication to the perpetration of generic, mainstream media, isn’t surprising either: zinesters, skateboarders, and rock-poster artists alike grew up with Yoda, Darth Vader, and Leia. We claim Jedi Knight as our religious affiliation on our tax forms and have perfected the *gzxt* light saber sound effect as if it were a different word for combat.

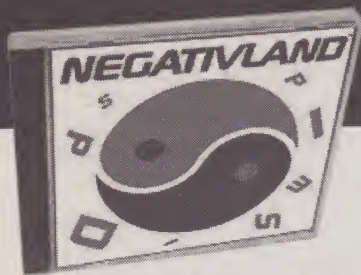
Then again, Star Wars is not alone in usurping the underground for big corporate promotions: Tylenol and Nike adopted similar strategies, both also evident last summer. Other companies are following suit. And somehow, this time, the underground is allowing itself to be usurped.



KET

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OUCH!





Weiden and Kennedy has been at the cutting edge of recruiting the underground for years. In 1997, after the release of Negativland's commercial-skewing album *Dispepsi*, the firm offered the band an enormous amount of money to do to Miller Genuine Draft's back catalogue of ads what they'd just done to the soft-drink manufacturers'.

The band turned it down.

From a marketing point of view, the underground—a vast network of people united only in their disinclination to buy what the mainstream might wish to sell—has always been a tough market to break into. This is especially true if you're a major media star or multimillionaire, two intersecting camps that almost anyone ever affiliated with *Star Wars* can be split into. It's worth your marketing team's effort, though, because when the underground's abuzz with your *thing*—your movie, your soda, your footwear, your drug of choice—it sells like hotcakes.

That's why using the underground—now thought of as hipsters, punks, skaters, and B-boys—to inspire and disseminate promotional materials is not by any means a new phenomenon. Thomas Frank's *The Conquest of Cool* documents the selling of underground culture in the 1960s through the marketing industry's adaptation of rock-and-roll music and psychedelic artwork. Frank's *the Baffler*, and other periodicals such as *Adbusters* and *Stay Free! Magazine* have tracked these strategies up to the present day.

Nonetheless, the underground I grew up in has remained somewhat impervious until now. Punk was always the thing that simply *couldn't* sell out: It was ugly and nasty and in full opposition to money and fame and whatever success could possibly derive from a really big Miller Genuine Draft paycheck. Punk was founded on integrity above all else and that necessarily disappears when money changes hands. That's why the CDs were cheap, the zines often free, and the T-shirts torn and natty. Whatever else it was, the underground I grew up in was unmarketable.

But so, for a time, was Bob Dylan.

Then around a decade ago, a soda appeared that would, actually, change all that. It was a weird soda, and you couldn't really order it in restaurants or get it out of vending machines in places where you normally found vending machines. It didn't compete with Coke or Pepsi: in fact it came in flavors like Green Apple and—*christ*—Turkey and Gravy. Most importantly, it had a low-key straightforward logo that almost wasn't worth the effort of calling it a logo. The name, too, was as generic as you could get: Jones Soda. As if to refuse to capitalize on this lack of branding, the Jones Soda labels were even printed with limited-edition photographic images, each pulled from customers' submitted artwork.

This was no OK Cola, a snarky, foul-tasting concoction from the big boys on the block, who identified the coolest rising stars from the underground comics community to shill their product to disaffected youth. This was a beverage of the people.

Founder and CEO Peter van Stolk makes sure you know it, too. As his own bio on the Jones Soda website explains: "He entered the highly competitive beverage industry, learned the rules and then promptly rejected them." In interviews, he talks about his ski-bum past and not giving "a rat's ass" ("Jonesing for Soda" by Ryan Underwood, *FastCompany*, March 2005) about your opinions of him or of his little drink company. "His skateboard-dude persona might be a bit unorthodox for the boardroom," the March 15, 2004 *Beverage World* reported.

But the members of the board are not the ones making Jones Soda popular: other skateboard-dudes are. Jones Soda was targeted immediately to the 13–24 year old set, as evidenced by the odd locations chosen for their vending machines: skateparks, bike shops, record stores. A Jones Soda RV even brought free drinks out to snowboarding competitions, concerts, and other underground locales to connect, in unmolested space, with its target demographic.

Lest you begin to wonder whether or not van Stolk retains true, deep-seated feelings about your beverage needs, however, consider this anecdote, from Underwood's interview: "The very first case of Jones Soda went to the founder of Nike, Phil Knight. He got the first case of Jones Soda. I don't know if he ever saw it. But he sent a letter—I don't know if he signed it or if his secretary signed it. I don't care; it's framed in the boardroom. I just really like what he was doing. One of the things about Jones Soda, I always viewed Jones as an accessory."

Clearly, van Stolk knows how to market his accessory—and he learned it from the best. Yet what was unique about Jones Soda was not that it was chasing after alternative cultures, like Nike has done, but that it was willing to define itself as an integral part of alternative culture in order to attract that demographic. "They discover us in environments where they hang out," van Stolk told *USA Today* in the April 22, 2002 edition. "It makes us legitimate." And it's van Stolk's active marketing of this marketing technique that some hold responsible for the questionable ethics currently dominating the marketplace of marketing.

He's cited, for example, as an inspiration by Proctor & Gamble, which in 2001 created the highly successful (and much reviled) Tremor program for marketing young adult products to young adults by young adults. It sports close to 250,000 dedicated youth, who get free products in the mail to chat up to their friends. A similar peer-to-peer marketing style has been adopted by a Boston firm called BzzAgent, which places a mere 60,000 volunteer marketers of all ages on the streets for a wide variety of products, each performing one-on-one promotions for the books, frozen dinners, or cosmetics BzzAgent represents.

Cynics may call it Product Placement X-treme, but marketing strategists—and psychologists—just know it works. That marketing



would adopt such an approach startles no one, but that marketers have recently convinced zinesters, graffiti artists, and punk-rock musicians to join such campaigns is astounding.

Perhaps the most amazing aspect of this shift in technique is not that marketing strategists have managed to convince punks the world over to shill for their products, but that marketing itself has changed enough so that punks *could* shill for their products. Marketers have not come up with—*finally!*—enough hot groupies, big checks, and sweet cars to woo over, I don't know, Ian MacKaye. Instead, marketing has fundamentally shifted, become an integral part of life for kids at such an early age that supporters and fans of Ian MacKaye don't necessarily see what they're doing as selling out. They're just working with their pals, *man*, and those guys are *finally* in positions of power and *finally* making enough money that the rest of this scene can get in on that action.

In other words, it is not the case that clandestine marketing teams toil away by cover of night at the discovery of new, nefarious means of getting us to give up our hard-won integrity for a couple of bucks, health insurance, or a sponsorship or two. It's that our friends, our acquaintances, our compatriots in the struggle to condemn the bad and appreciate the good have simply gone into marketing. Marketers today, working for PR firms like Faith Popcorns' BrainReserve or more traditional advertising firms like Weiden and Kennedy want the same things we want: wider appreciation of good music, art, and writing; the creators of good music, art, and writing to be well-taken care of so they can continue to do their work; and the elimination of distasteful advertising from the world, forever.

The hipsters at Weiden and Kennedy, for example, have been at the cutting edge of recruiting the underground since well before 1997, when they approached the still-recovering-from-several-copyright-infringement-lawsuits Negativland to do a Miller Genuine Draft commercial following their release of *Dispepsi*. (In fact, Weiden and Kennedy's recent studio art residency program [see the Blow, PP65] is merely a continuation of this approach.)

Dispepsi is an interesting album; it uses remixed Pepsi and Coke advertisements to, in Negativland member Mark Hosler's words, "obsessively and relentlessly focus on one product from beginning to end, to have this sort of ultimately insane product placement."

In an interview conducted a few years ago, Hosler goes on to describe the tension surrounding the group's release, their follow-up to the legally controversial *U2* record: "The question that everyone had was, 'Why did you do this? You're taking this huge risk against the world's second largest soft-drink manufacturer, who's going to nail your ass.' . . . We had five volunteer lawyers lined up to help us out, we were getting advice, I was preparing some very basic legal briefs in response to Pepsi's attack on us if it came. The lawyers were saying, 'If they go after you, you're going to have about 10 days to reply to them and you'd better start thinking about it now.' So we were ready."

But when Pepsi's response came, it was not what the group had prepared for: a corporate spokesperson called it "a pretty good listen."

Yet *Dispepsi* did draw the attention of Weiden and Kennedy, so that instead of the legal battle they were expecting, Negativland was offered an enormous amount of money to do to Miller Genuine Draft's back catalogue of ads what they'd just done to the soft-drink manufacturers' for free. Hosler and company turned it down, but to this day continue to reel from the knowledge that their attempt at subversion struck the ad firm as a great promotional ploy.

Faith Popcorn's BrainReserve operates along similar lines. BrainReservists specialize in invisible, or guerilla, marketing: campaigns that enlist consumers in corporate decision-making in order to conceal the fact that those consumers are spreading positive word-of-mouth about specific products, based on limited information and for no compensation. Calling herself a "futurist" instead of a PR person and dubbed the "Nostradamus of marketing" by *Fortune*, Popcorn even disallows visible clothing brand names from her firm, recommending instead logo-free blacks and greys. BrainReservists may find it a little odd, but grow to appreciate the uniform. "Being so intimately involved in evaluating and carrying out guerilla marketing campaigns made [one employee] appreciate the purity of clothes that hadn't been marketed to her," a February 26, 2005 *New York Observer* story by Maureen Tkacik noted.

It's not, therefore, that marketing people are all that different from—well, you and me. In fact, they seem to have remarkably familiar concerns. As Bonnie Burton, zinester and Lucasfilm, Ltd. employee, puts it, "I wanted to get some street culture into our promotions mainly because that's what I think is cool."

The athletic shoe company

Smack dab in the middle of last summer, Nike Skateboarding released a promotional campaign for its 2005 East Coast tour, cleverly entitled *Major Threat*. They had even based the campaign imagery on the album art from a 1981 Dischord Records release from a band, *Minor Threat*, that most of polite society had never heard of.

Many would view this as Nike's first mistake: that the same obscure demographic that would happen to know about—and feel compassion for—*Minor Threat* was the exact market they hoped to gain the respect—and attendance—of with the promotional campaign. To put it mildly, that same demographic freaked. Cyberspace was nearly filled with immediate questions, accusations, frustrations. All in condemnation of Nike.

Almost right away, to the appreciation—although not quite admiration—of the skateboarding community, Nike Skateboarding pulled the ad on June 27 and issued an official apology. Five days

before the Major Threat 2005 East Coast Tour ended anyway.

And every Minor Threat fan alive knew about it.

Dischord representatives felt, rightly, fucked over by the campaign—if not by the fact that the campaign had clearly already done its job of publicizing the tour. The label's official response to the Nike apology appeared on their website immediately: "It is," the statement declared, "disheartening to us to think that Nike may be successful in using this imagery to fool kids . . . into thinking that the general ethos of this label, and Minor Threat in particular, can somehow be linked to Nike's mission."

Dischord's founder Ian MacKaye, almost instantaneously deluged with "hundreds and hundreds" of emails (several from sympathetic lawyers) cannot emphasize his disinterest in the shoe company enough: "I *never* would put their fucking swoosh on anything I would do. Not for ironic reasons, not for cynical reasons, nothing," he says.

The label's official statement, however, was slightly more reserved. Dischord's response summed up the experience as yet "an-

with an email to *Punk Planet* that "the skate group's intentions in making the flyer were not malicious, as a parody, or even to rip off the band or the record label." He stated that he was confident that Ian MacKaye and the label understood Nike's position and declined to comment further.

MacKaye, however, not only the founder of Dischord but also a former member of Fugazi (the band who once sang "What could a businessman ever want more / Than to have us sucking in his store . . . You are not what you own") as well as Minor Threat, doesn't seem quite as understanding as Nike would like. "It's such a fuckin' puzzler," he says. "And one that I never really asked for."

While MacKaye ponders how to handle the situation, label manager Alec Bourgeois doubts Dischord would take any legal action. "Basically," he tells me over the phone, "Nike knows that they screwed up."

MacKaye agrees that, to some degree, what's done is done. "To get engaged in a legal struggle over any of this stuff . . ." he says, and gets quiet for a second. I've heard the same pause in the voices of everyone I've spoken to who's been tempted to go to court over intellectual property rights. No one, ultimately, wants to spend time and money battling for legal precedent from a system already biased against their interests. "It leaves these decisions to be made by a deeply dysfunctional organization, namely the US government," MacKaye explains.

In fact, MacKaye doesn't even want to talk about it anymore. Any further engagement with the corporate shoe giant, whether in court or on the streets, "does their work for them," he says.

Yet with a legal battle off the table, the question of what to do—and who to hold accountable—remains.

Bourgeois blames, in part, corporate mentality. In evidence, he points to Nike's own apology, which states that the campaign was created "by skateboarders, for skateboarders," and he doesn't doubt the veracity of that statement. In fact, he says, "That's fine. But when your paycheck comes from Nike, you're no longer just representing yourself. If you belong to an independent company, then your company is a reflection of the workers." Yet when you work for a humungous megacorporation, like the \$14 billion per year athletic clothing company, "the products they're making have nothing to do with the process. It's purely about the acquisition of capital."

And if anyone knows how to build a company that reflects the workers, it's Dischord. A bedrock force in independent music since their founding in 1980, the label's vital proof that independent culture can survive, and thrive, even in this ever-incorporating world. "I've always said that about the difference between Dischord and major labels is that major labels produce



Most amazing is not that marketing strategists have managed to convince punks the world over to shill for their products, but that marketing itself has changed enough so that punks could shill for their products.

other familiar example of mainstream corporations attempting to assimilate underground culture to turn a buck."

There is, however, something more complicated going on here than the assimilation of the underground. For one thing, Nike's June 27 apology states, the poster was "designed, executed, and promoted by skateboarders, for skateboarders. All of the Nike employees responsible for the creation of the tour flyer are fans of both Minor Threat and Dischord Records and have nothing but respect for both."

In other words, Nike is saying, hipster ad firm Weiden and Kennedy—which company was born when cofounder Dan Weiden borrowed a typewriter from Nike CEO Phil Knight, and which has handled the bulk of the shoe giant's marketing since—wasn't involved.

Kevin Immamura, who wrote the Nike apology, followed up



plastic, and we produce music," Bourgeoise says.

Which makes Dischord all the crazier of a target for the shoe company's weird advertising appropriation—and all the more salacious of one.

Bourgeois seems to understand these complications. When our conversation veers off into discussing the scourge of major labels, he voices some unasked-for advice to a band, any band, that tries to retain integrity in a world filled with corporate-sponsored music. "There's an industry around you that works," he offers, "whether you agree with it or not."

Unfortunately for Dischord, the same has been said of marketing: the industry is all around you, and it works. Whether you agree with it or not.

The filmmakers

Somewhere around the beginning of the year, we received a nondescript envelope at PPHQ containing a stenciled T-shirt, several crappy, homemade stickers, some one-inch buttons, and a deliberately crumpled letter signed in crayon from Lucasfilm, Ltd. The letter stated, in part:

This package of cool Star Wars schwag was sent to you because you are:

- [] Working at a cool, underground magazine
- [] In a band that might have a Star Wars fan in it
- [] An actor/writer/celeb who digs Star Wars—or I secretly hope loves droids, Wookies, and Vader.
- [] Going to wear this rare Episode III shirt to all your paparazzi-infested events.

Be sure to wear this shirt with pride, sticker bomb your favorite hang out with these stickers and decorate your favorite jacket with pin backs. Yoda sure will appreciate the effort.

On our copy, boxes one and four were X-ed off in lime green crayon. The stickers are worthy of further description, too: one contained a sketchy outline of Yoda next to a digitized clip-art Mr. T, arm in arm above the slogan "Peace between the races." This image was shabbily photocopied onto the same atomic green sticker paper you can get at Kinko's.

The letter further invites readers to a website, Grrl.com, that contains no official markers of its creation by Lucasfilm employee Bonnie Burton. It simply appears to be a fan site for hipsters who grew up in love with Luke Skywalker. That Burton is also the publisher of a zine called *Grrl* only serves to further blur the line between what is genuinely DIY and what is done for the man. Grrl.com is an underground artist's dream: clear directions for T-shirt stenciling, iron-on creation, handmade sticker making, wheatpasting. Much of this is not legal in public streets, of course, but the site offers spaces for you to send in pix of your creation *in situ* anyway.

So participants could, it seems, create some illegal street art, post images to the site, and link themselves surreptitiously to one of the most well-beloved films ever created, likely increasing their

own audiences for their own work. "Were they getting paid as well?" I ask Burton.

"No one was paid as far as participants that I know of," she tells me. "We just did it in an underground kind of way."

Participants in the campaign, however, have varying stories. Some claim to have contributed work primarily to get their names out there, while some allude a more tangible, five-figure reward.

"It was very casual," MCA of Evil Design tells me enigmatically, referring to the relationship that led to the inclusion of his Yoda/Mr. T stickers in the packet we received at *Punk Planet* before declining to comment further. No one, however, would go on record with a final accounting of the benefits their participation in the marketing of Star Wars reaped.

Yet the benefit to the filmmakers—at the expense of the underground—is clear: a news site off the official Star Wars homepage describes the upsurge of interest in Star Wars characters emerging from the underground, miraculously coinciding with the film's release: "While Episode III ads and promos were easy to spot on TV, magazines, and in grocery stores, there also appeared a number of cool items tailored for teens and their interests including online community building, street art, underground fashion trends and upcoming bands," a June 15, 2005 item on *Starwars.com* reads, headlined "Underground Spawns Cool Swag and Avatars."

Technically, it's difficult to say exactly *who* spawned the "cool swag and avatars," but the perception that these arose naturally from the underground certainly contributes to the film's popularity. Indeed, such "cool items" added heft to the charge bandied about over the summer that "George Lucas is a Jedi master of merchandising," as Frank Ahrens noted in the May 16, 2005 *Free New Mexican*. With characters hyping everything from cell phones to candy in TV commercials, and appearing in action figures and more standard toy form for children as young as four (despite that the film earned a PG-13 for violence), the marketing of the final Star Wars struck many as ubiquitous. Inescapable. Irresistible. Like the force.

And the agenda at work behind these hidden machinations? "There was no agenda," Burton answers, "other than to get fans—from all walks—excited about the Episode III film and DVD release." Excited enough, one assumes, to spend money on the film: Almost four times the film's original budget in the US alone as of press time, and still growing, to be more precise.

OK, so their corporate marketing agenda is not hidden, or evil, or even all that vile, when you think about it. But the methods—and therefore the means of acquiring that nearly \$400 million, some from viewers who believed their peers were behind the film recommendations—were.

Hi!

To celebrate the release of *Star Wars: Episode III Revenge of the Sith* this package of cool *Star Wars* swag was sent to you because you are:

- [] Working at a cool, underground magazine
- [] In a band that might just have a *Star Wars* fan in it.
- [] An actor/writer/director who digs *Star Wars* - or I secretly hope loves droids, Wookiese, and Vader
- [] Going to wear this rare Episode III shirt to all your paparazzi-infested events.

Be sure to wear this shirt with pride, sticker bomb your favorite hang out with these stickers and decorate your jacket with pin backs. Yoda sure will appreciate the effort.

And if you want more stickers, stencils and some cool one-of-a-kind posters to download head over to my alter-ego: <http://www.grt.com/starwarsstuff.html>

And don't forget to grab a swarm of bunnies and go see *Star Wars: Episode III Revenge of the Sith* this week and next week... and back... how about all month long?!

Thanks

- Bonnie Burton
Lucasfilm Ltd.
Bonnie.Burton@Lucasfilm.com

"There was no agenda," Lucasfilm's Bonnie Burton says about the *Star Wars* campaign, "other than to get fans—from all walks—excited about the Episode III film and DVD release."

Excited enough, one assumes, to spend money on the film.

The pharmaceutical manufacturers

A short overview of the Ouch! campaign can essentially act as a primer for almost all that is hip in underground culture: films by Tim Greenberg, comics by Leslie Stein and Ron Régé, Jr., a free, split CD from American Analogue Set and White Magic, a staff that includes musician BARR and skateboard writer Jocko Weyland, zines by photographer Tobin Yelland, and writing—and consulting—by *Arthur* publisher Laris Kreslins. It was conceived of as a sponsor of events like underground film fests and extreme sports competitions "that relate to modern day lifestyles that involve pain," according to ouchthewebsite.com. Heralded (albeit via paid advertisements) by magazines like *Giant Robot* and *Spin*, Ouch! appeared to many to simply be an organic offshoot of underground culture. But wait, there's more: Ouch! is a program, we find out eventually, "brought to you by the good people who make Tylenol®."

Apparently the drug maker, owned by McNeil Consumer and Specialty Pharmaceuticals, a subsidiary of Johnson and Johnson, had tired of its reputation as "that cyanide-laced pain-killer" and decided to hippify itself in an attempt to appeal to the generation who grew up fearing over-the-counter medicines after the 1982 tamperings. As ad guru Jerry Della Femina told the *New York Times* right after the poisonings, "There may be an advertising person who thinks he can solve this and if they find him, I want to hire him." Eventually, they found "him": Faith Popcorn and team stepped in 18 years later to bring the brand to the younger generation. Under the BrainReservists, Tylenol would own *pain* the way Nike owned *athleticism*. The Ouch! campaign was destined to permanently change the very way young people experienced their own bodies.

Not to mention that for many artists, it was a *fucking cash cow*, man.

"I got paid what I usually make in a year," Ron Régé, Jr., who made a set of three dolls with toy company Critterbox (the Ouch!

Twins and the Wizard, as they are known), tells *Punk Planet*.

Régé was excited to do it, too. "It was part of the whole concept that they get someone that was not that well known and that hadn't done toys before," he says. He was interested to see how his weird graphic language would translate to mass-produced 3D objects. When they were done, all 3500 figures were snapped up in no time, despite their extremely limited distribution through only eight stores located in LA, New York, and San Francisco. And although they could likely have retailed for around \$40, Ouch! gave them away for free. "I am sure that making the dolls and all the other stuff that was involved with it was more costly than paying me," the cartoonist estimates.

"A commercial haven for funding art," *Print* magazine called Ouch! in the July/August 2005 issue. The article went on to posit that the campaign had been largely abandoned as a failure by BrainReservists and McNeil alike. (Although both the BrainReserve and McNeil refused to discuss the campaign with *Punk Planet* for this reason, ads continued to appear as we went to press in September.)

At least one of the goals of the campaign, however, seems to have been fulfilled: to have the drug "talked about in different types of conversations," as Sophie Wong of the BrainReserve told the *Chicago Reader*.

One Ouch! project, for example, offered health insurance to the winner of a zine contest co-sponsored by *Tokion* called King of Zine. Shortly after the contest was announced, I had a conversation of exactly the kind Wong would have been proud with three thoroughly independent artists: Sam Gould of the Portland, OR-based arts group Red76, Bonnie Fortune of Free Walking, a Chicago-based organization devoted to the exploration of walking as entertainment and education, and Mike Wolf, founder of the Network of Casual Art, an information and funding resource for local artists, and member of Chicago alternative space, Mess Hall. "Have you heard about Tylenol's King of Zine contest?" I ask the group.

"I know Ouch!" Gould responds. "Tylenol is putting out little art things and they're putting out CDs . . . That was the CD I was talking about—when I had that very spiritual shower moment." He had earlier mentioned a profound moment he'd had listening to some music, and had described the experience in some detail without noting the name of the album or the artist.

"Sponsored by Tylenol," I joke.

Gould laughs. "Sponsored by Tylenol! I have very mixed emotions about that. I think it's both a really interesting thing, like, 'maybe that's a really great thing! Way to go, Tylenol!' Or, maybe that's a really horrible thing. Like, I don't want you involved however. Get out of my spiritual knowing-ness."

"Well, check this out," I lean in to explain. "They're doing a contest where zinesters send in copies of their publications and win a year of health insurance."

"Whoa!" Gould reacts.



Fortune is no less shocked: "Shut up! I got to send that in! I need health insurance hard-core! But that's terrible! And it's those people who need health insurance!"

"I can't wrap my head around it," Gould quips. "I need some aspirin."

I'm sure hundreds, if not thousands, of similar conversations took place across the US around the same time. It's not that ours was particularly sparking or witty, but it is remarkable that four dedicated independent cultural producers had a conversation about Tylenol at all. Perhaps it is premature to predict this, but I strongly doubt another corporate product will ever dominate my conversation the way this one did that weekend. Realizing this makes it clear that apparently my attention can be bought.

"That's crap!" Wolf finally weighs in. Usually a subdued man, he is nearly spitting beer. "I mean, what PR genius came up with that?"

Technically speaking, the PR genius that came up with it is none other than *Arthur* publisher Kreslins, who judged accurately that Tylenol would prove willing to spend their money on a cool idea, even if they had to overlook the glaring fact that it was downright weird for a drug company to be offering health care to someone the rest of the corporate world would probably deem an undesirable.

"I didn't come up with the zine idea. Just the idea for a prize," Kreslins tells me. "At the time I didn't really have health care. I just thought, if you're going to throw money at something, do something useful. Don't give away cash prizes!"

Tokion publisher Adam Glickman loved the idea. "We had the idea for the King of Zine contest before presenting it to the Ouch! campaign for sponsorship consideration. Our original idea was to offer a cash prize but they suggested the free health insurance," he says. I consider correcting him, naming the *real* origin of the prize idea, but then I remember that Kreslins was on the Ouch! payroll at the time.

"I could talk for hours about the goods and not-so-goods of US pharmaceutical companies," Glickman tells me of pairing with the drug company, "but I thought the prize they offered was a great idea. We all know how expensive health insurance has become, especially for artists."

But, *Ouchthewebsite.com* explains, it's not so much about the prizes. Nor is it about the hip products. "We don't just showcase the talent, we get them to do the work too. To get an inside look into the pain of living, we're letting the stories come directly from an inspirational collection of artists, writers, illustrators, musicians, and photographers who bring their own piece of artistic vision to this project."

In other words, Tylenol's parent company McNeil hints, we own you. "Though the branding of Ouch! is upfront—Tylenol isn't trying to conceal it's hand—it's also low-key," Bob Mehr writes of the campaign for the *Chicago Reader*. And the artists seem to agree.

Leslie Stein, a Xeric Grant winner from 2003, described her relationship with Tylenol as "really organic, which made it

a very easy and uncomplicated job situation . . . Throughout this process I had no contact with anyone from Tylenol and only talked to Jerry [Lim of Plastic Enigma, hired by Ouch! to create the website] who was basically just trying to use his friends' bands, artists, and writers to give them a bit of money and exposure, or at least that's what it seemed like to me . . . I didn't really feel a part of the whole corporate advertising machine. It's not like I drew a picture of a guy holding a bottle of Tylenol and smiling, I basically just did what I wanted. And Tylenol and Ouch! put their name next to it."

Yet whether or not Stein *felt* a part of the corporate advertising machine, it would be difficult to argue that she *wasn't* a part of it—an integral part. Moreover, Tylenol's behavior during the Ouch! campaign hasn't been as beyond reproach as many in the underground would like to believe.

For example, over the summer, Tylenol gave away free samples of a sweetened, mint-flavored pain reliever to kids. Called Cool Caplets, the medicine is described as having an "instant cooling" effect, and was handed out by scantily clad women called the Cool Caps Girls in Times Square and on Miami Beach. Providing misleading information about pharmaceutical effects and perpetuating sexist stereotypes are bad enough, but the drugmaker caused even more damage when it got involved in a 2003 skatepark project in Brooklyn.

That would be the Autumn Bowl, and the Ouch! project helped initiate construction with a \$30,000 seed grant to the group who'd planned it. With no signage identifying the space as funded by Tylenol or McNeil, Sophie Wong told the *Reader*, the skating community still—miraculously—picked up on it and started calling it the Tylenol Bowl. "You can't purchase that," Wong said. "The audience took it themselves and they're marketing it without a dollar being spent."

Which, if true, would be an amazing admission that the Ouch! campaign fulfilled even Wong's unstated goals for it: that the underground had grown to love Tylenol all of its lonesome, based solely on the affection hipsters felt for their favored headache remedy. But it wasn't true. Not at all.

In fact, it was an Ouch! press release that renamed the Autumn Bowl after the corporate sponsor, the *Print* article notes. David Mimms, owner of the New York skate shop behind the Autumn Bowl, Autumn Skateshop, explains that this and other incidents of dishonesty and secret strings attached to his no-strings-attached agreement marked the end of his relationship with Ouch!.

It had all started with a small idea Mimms talked about with a few other friends. To build a skatepark. It was a simple, small plan that they hoped would grow organically. Yet one of his friends was working on the Ouch! campaign and thought maybe the pharmaceutical manufacturer would throw in some money if Ouch! could

hold an opening party there. A \$30,000 donation arrived shortly thereafter. "It was way too easy," Mimms says.

Suddenly, the small group had a lot of money to make their project happen, so it happened fast. In fact, it happened so fast that the \$30,000 was gone in no time. Tylenol offered another donation, and urged Mimms and company to spend whatever they needed. Tylenol promised to kick in some more.

Mimms was already overworked, and the speeded-up timetable didn't help. "I was really in trouble," he says. He could barely manage to keep both the skateshop and the park open. And the expenses kept accruing. Soon, they owed another \$25,000 on the Autumn Bowl. "We were losing more every month," he says dejectedly. And everyone else was tired, too. "We hardly ever had any staff there."

And no more money ever appeared from Tylenol to help with the rising debt. Realizing they had ended up "promising more than they delivered," Mimms cut ties to the drug company and tried to figure out how to pay for a skatepark that wouldn't have been so expensive had the corporate sponsor not urged speedy production and needlessly expensive materials. But at least their influence would no longer be felt.

It was ponderous, then, when Mimms later heard through the grapevine that Wong had taken out an ad in an underground publication describing a new contest Ouch! was holding wherein contestants could "win a trip to the Tylenol Bowl." The skateshop owner couldn't have been more frustrated. "It should be called the Pat Smith Bowl," Mimms states, after one of his friends who worked to keep the space open after Tylenol money failed to come through. Plus, he notes with irony, "the ad"—which, once he complained, was pulled—"cost more than they'd spent on us."

The worst part about his experience on the Tylenol Bowl project? "They still call it that!" Mimms says.

It's an experience mirrored in both the Star Wars campaign and by Nike Skateboarding's Major Threat apology: a sudden spate of work emerges, seemingly organically, from the underground, and any ties to its corporate sponsorship, however loose, are hidden.

It is clear in all these instances, however, that hardly any of these projects would have been created without that corporate sponsorship. Yet the concealment of the corporate origins of cultural products leads other members of the underground to see the resultant marketing as passion- and integrity-filled cultural production—when in fact the artists may have simply seen it as an easy way to make a buck or get a leg up in a tough market for creatives.

Athletic shoe company, reprise

"I'm not disputing doing work for Tylenol is selling out," Kreslins tells me of his participation in the Ouch! campaign. "Nike is a different situation. It's not like [Tylenol] said, 'We like Ron Regé, Jr.'s work, let's totally copy it and send it to the public.' The Nike thing was totally disgusting."

Ian MacKaye agrees. "The Nike business differs [from the Ouch! and Star Wars promotions] in that it wasn't an authorized campaign, nor was it national (though the Internet made it worldwide). I suppose there is an undeniable co-opting of revolutionary or rebellious images or ideas in play here, but at least in this case it wasn't one with which the band/artist collaborated."

By its own admission Nike acknowledges that the band and the artist had nothing to do with the Major Threat campaign.

The Major Threat tour poster was "designed, executed, and promoted by skateboarders, for skateboarders," says Nike.

In other words, don't blame us: blame yourselves.



Again, the tour poster was simply "designed, executed, and promoted by skateboarders, for skateboarders."

In other words, Nike is saying, don't blame us: blame yourselves.

And for once, Nike is right. Yet how Nike became the kind of company that skateboard dudes and Minor Threat fans would feel allegiance to is a story of its own. It probably has much to do with the branding work of Weiden and Kennedy, but may also have ties to the acquisition of Converse in July of 2003.

That an infamous human-rights violating athletic shoe manufacturer had just purchased a beloved underground icon didn't change the fact that most hipsters would have killed to work for Converse, even under new management.

Chicago rock-poster artist Jay Ryan would have, all throughout his skateboard dude youth. Then he actually got the chance.

"They approached me with a very open project," Ryan explains, describing how he came to work for the shoe giant, "basically saying, 'Draw anything you want for us, and we'll make a billboard and pay you some money and send you a pair of shoes.' I knew Converse was owned by Nike, and had Nike (proper) called,



I would not have taken the job. I won't wear Nike shoes, and don't want my name on their ads. I *have*, however, worn Converse pretty much my whole life."

Ryan struggled with the question for a while, unsure if he would lend his vastly praised underground postering talents to the megacorporation. "They want to align the Converse name with 'cool' things that have 'street cred' and 'the kids' want, and they've mistaken my work for something which falls into this category."

Yet ultimately, the artist most famous for his Shellac gigposters says, "Since the image didn't even have to have shoes in it (which it doesn't), I felt I could justify taking this job." And so a 100-foot canvas appeared in downtown Chicago in early 2005, featuring Ryan's immediately recognizable imagery, as well as his name, proclaiming for a time his endorsement of Nike-owned Converse.

As cartoonist Leslie Stein describes it, becoming a part of the corporate advertising machine feels really organic. I know; I once took a paycheck from Starbucks to plan the first-ever Ink Spot for Seattle's Bumbershoot Arts Festival. A free zine-making creative area and workshop space for all attendees—although the Bumbershoot admission price was quite hefty—I was one of three zinesters given the budget to *pay our cool friends to come help us do whatever we wanted*.

As long as, we were told some weeks after the contracts were signed and some days before the festival was to begin, the Starbucks logo could be put on the back of each item created in the free workshop space.

Well, that plan was dropped—although we all had to threaten to quit over it. The Starbucks logo did, however, appear on the programming guide, in all the promotional materials, and in several locations within the venue. So did the free coffee. My compulsion to explain what I did with the money—Ron Regé and Jay Ryan felt it too, describing the groceries and cross-country move that wouldn't have been possible without the corporate paycheck—won't justify that I provided Starbucks an inroad to the underground.

The fact is, our relationships to these corporations are not unambiguous. Sam Gould had a spiritual moment in the shower listening to a CD created, according to Sophie Wong, so that he would talk about Tylenol with his hip peers later. And we did! MCA liked Star Wars, and didn't mind having his work sent all over the US to all the "cool, underground magazines" they were marketing too, either! Why would he? Some skateboarders in

Radio Free of Ethics

When the marketing department of radio behemoth Clear Channel Communications decided to fake a pirate radio station in Ohio, did they really think no one would find out?

By Roman Mars

Clear Channel is the embodiment of the establishment, and everyone hates the establishment: no one knows this like Clear Channel themselves. So when Clear Channel markets their radio stations, they know it's best to keep their name out of it. This is especially true when they are trying to attract those suspicious, corporation-hating progressives. Recently, when a cloaked Clear Channel promised a radio revolution in Ohio, it was widely dismissed as disingenuous marketing typical of amoral corporations. Yet the tragedy is that for listeners in Ohio hungry for real revolution in radio, absolutely nothing has changed.

Imagine: it's May 2005 and you're rocking out to your favorite Clear Channel station in Akron, Ohio (bear with me: it's a hypothetical) when the commercial barrage is interrupted by voices bleeding into the signal from what seems to be

a pirate station. The pirates' message is this: the revolution is coming. Finally! Get yer musket!

The on-air messages led people to the website for Radio Free Ohio (Radiofreeohio.org), on which appeared a screed titled "Radio in Ohio Sucks." One of the problems was diagnosed as such: "Gone are the days when we could hear a newsman deliver the news about what was happening in my town." The manifesto went on to excoriate the radio establishment for their "corporate mandated opinions" and playlists. Such criticisms have dogged corporate media giants like Clear Channel for years, and are very much in step with what a pirate station in Akron, Ohio would think. It's just that Radio Free Ohio is Clear Channel.

The discovery was made on May 20 on the Radio-info.com message board. Radio-info.com is a website where the wonkiest of commercial

radio wonks go to talk about the industry. After several contributors to the Cleveland area board posted about the supposed interruptions heard on a few of the radio stations in the Akron area, member "drbob932" found that the IP address of Radio Free Ohio was registered to Clear Channel Communications in San Antonio, TX. The news was picked up on the message boards at WOXY.com (an independent, Internet-only radio station) and then spread like wildfire throughout the blogosphere.

The deceit made sense from a marketing standpoint: when you're a large company like Clear Channel (which owns about 1200 radio stations in the US) you're bound to run up against yourself sometime. It's almost impossible to listen to two radio stations at once, so Clear Channel stations are necessarily fighting over the same listener. They can distinguish themselves with



The reason the Major Threat snafu “became such a big story,” says ex-Minor Threat frontman Ian MacKaye, “is that people are justifiably upset by the totality of the marketing world.”

“There was a mistake made,” he relates when I ask him how he’s going to disassociate himself after being linked to the shoe giant against his will. “The mistake was acknowledged and a public apology was made.”

In marketing terms, however—and this I express to MacKaye—the athletic clothing company has won. Their message got to more people earlier. He concedes this: “There may be some people who don’t get the memo.” But, he says, there will also be some people “who will never buy Nike shoes again.”

Regardless of consumer fallout, and the shift in fan base that may or may not affect Dischord and Minor Threat, the athletic

clothing manufacturer hit upon a compelling issue with their theft.

“The reason it became such a big story is that people are justifiably upset by the totality of the marketing world,” MacKaye says. “I appreciated people’s uproar and outrage, but I don’t think it’s a tribute to my work, rather an indication of their spiritual frustration with a society that has such total and complete marketing . . . it’s everywhere, at all times.”

MacKaye acknowledges that he could ask for money and the point would be made: Nike had done something wrong, and they would have to pay for it. It wouldn’t be unheard of, and if Internet message boards are any indication, many fans of Minor Threat would approve of this resolution.

Washington, DC were asked to create an ad campaign for the East Coast Summer Tour, and they all love Minor Threat. Use it! Why not? Shill for Converse? I would have been happy to 10 years ago. But now, what’s really changed?

And that of course is the question to be answered: what’s changed is who is ultimately accountable. In the case of Converse, this is Nike, a disreputable company that uses a plethora of unsustainable business practices, shit-poor labor policies, and extremely disingenuous marketing—which allows you to forget the first two points on this three-point list.

All part of why MacKaye won’t deliberately associate with “their fucking swoosh.”

disparate formats (and in a single market, most do), but still: if someone is tuned to the KISS station, they aren’t tuned to the LITE station.

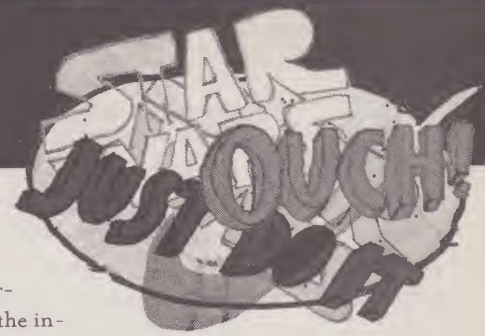
The Radio Free Ohio website, with its pirate-radio persona, took this internal competition to a whole new level by highlighting several stations in the Akron and Kent area and described why they all suck. Clear Channel-owned WHLO 640 AM (rural Northeast Ohio’s home to Rush, Hannity, and Savage) was among them, and was said to be “operated by a communist” and found guilty of broadcasting “nothing more than right-wing rhetoric dispensed at toxic levels.” The morning drive-time host at WKDD (another Clear Channel property) was described as a lothario whose exploits “would make Wilt Chamberlin look like an amateur.” The inflammatory text has been removed, but not before it was copied onto the *Stay Free! Magazine* blog (Blog.stayfreemagazine.org).

Even after Radio Free Ohio was exposed as Clear Channel, they attempted to perpetuate the deception. On May 31 at 12:06 pm the opening of Fox Sport’s *Jim Rome Show* on WTOU 1350 was overtaken, pirate-radio style. After a burst of AM static and some DJ chatter, listeners heard the familiar opening drum beats to Twisted Sister’s “We’re Not Gonna Take It.” The echoing voice of the announcer proclaimed: “Listen Up! For the past few weeks I’ve been telling you that radio needs to change. Radio needs to evolve. This time, we the people, take back radio, and the time is now . . . This is Radio Free Ohio broadcasting from behind the rubber curtain in Akron, Ohio and we’ve created a new radio format and we’re broadcasting from an abandoned tire factory in the heart of the best ‘blue’ county in Ohio: Summit. At Radio Free Ohio there are no rules, because we put

on what we want when we want. Welcome to the revolution!” More static followed, and the music bed switched to Public Enemy’s “Fight the Power” with archival clips from such noted revolutionaries as FDR and Kennedy floating over the raps of Chuck D and Flavor Flav.

Then came the revolution. And the shot heard ‘round the world was . . . *The Stephanie Miller Show*. Stephanie Miller is a banal, nationally syndicated rising star in progressive talk radio whose theme song also happens to be “We’re Not Gonna Take It.” WTOU Fox Sports 1350 AM was now officially WARF 1350 Radio Free Ohio: “Talk Radio for the Rest of Us.”

After all the pirate-style ranting, it turned out that the entire thing was a publicity stunt concocted to promote 1350 AM’s switch from a sports channel to a progressive talk format. Dan Lankford, vice president and market manager



But a secondary and more resonant point would be made as well: that even what's not offered to you can be purchased. "Everything has a price," MacKaye says.

Some things, however, just don't.

Yet even while MacKaye works out a creative way of explaining this to the shoe company, to his fans, and to the skateboarders responsible for the Major Threat campaign, the marketing industry continues to work all around us, whether we agree with it or not.

Marketing the underground

Perhaps Ian MacKaye is right in naming a general backlash against marketing a "spiritual frustration" with our ad-heavy society, but it only seems to manifest when we're confronted with traditional, identifiable advertising campaigns. It certainly doesn't seem to effect those who work for Tremor or BzzAgent, and it clearly didn't impede the artists who worked for Lucasfilm, Ltd. or Tylenol. Nor, more relevantly for our purposes, the skateboarders who created the Major Threat campaign for Nike.

But this spiritual frustration with traditional advertising does mean that peer-to-peer marketing is here to stay. Guerilla techniques and underground campaigns will continue, and they will become smarter and more difficult to discern from organically created cultural products.

If we value integrity, honesty, and our individual ability to make free choices, the underground needs to develop a response to such campaigns. And, unfortunately for MacKaye, who is sick of the whole thing, this means devoting time and energy to looking at how they operate.

Tremor and BzzAgent, for example, seem to work because participants never question the integrity of their contributions to the general awareness of product availability, according to a *New York Times* story by Rob Walker (December 5, 2004). Few tell friends they work in the marketing business, as they find it limits their credibility among peers. Marketing team members, who work on a volunteer basis in exchange for free gifts most never pick up, do not feel they are forwarding a hidden agenda. That they *themselves* retain a hidden agenda does not seem to bother them. After all, they know better than anyone else that they are not a part of the corporate advertising machine.

Yet Tremor youth and BzzAgents—as well as the Star Wars Episode III promotional participants, Ouch! campaign contributors, and the Nike Skateboarding marketing team members, not to mention those individuals responsible for Starbucks' Ink Spot at Seattle's Bumbershoot Arts Festival—are justifying themselves right out of the acknowledgement that they are, in fact, the most vital cog in the corporate advertising machine. They are the part that works, often freely and easily.

Perhaps a first step, to generally acknowledge such underground campaigns as marketing, will be necessary. And the next will be to fully admit to our participation in them. The underground—that variant but influential group united only in their disinclination to buy what the mainstream wants to sell—has always had a reputation for being a tough market. And some things should remain unmarketable. ©

for Clear Channel in Akron, told the *New York Times* that the fake pirate radio signal bleed and website manifesto was an effort "to get into the mindset of people who would listen to this new station." They didn't do a very good job, however, as the message boards on the Radio Free Ohio site were deluged with complaints from the very lefties Clear Channel was trying to court.

When they could no longer take the heat, Clear Channel took their message board offline. As of this writing, the only thing that exists at Radiofreeohio.org are the head-shots and program times of the six nationally syndicated talk-show hosts that make up the 1350 AM broadcast day. Even though the original Radio Free Ohio manifesto pined for the days of yesteryear when newsmen reported what was happening in "my home town," not a single program on 1350 AM originates from Akron, Ohio.

The ruse, however, might represent an interesting change in perspective for the radio giant. "Clear Channel is one of the major opponents to microbroadcasting and LPFM," says John Anderson of DIYmedia.net. "They were the ones [telling the FCC] that opening up the spectrum would lead to airplanes falling out of the sky due to interference and other doomsday predictions. But this effort to appropriate the image and style of pirate radio illustrates that they must not actually think that microbroadcasting is the evil spectre they previously purported it to be. What was once dark and dangerous is now being imitated and worth co-opting." Somehow though, it seems doubtful that Clear Channel will lobby congress on behalf of microbroadcasters anytime soon.

Contrary to Radio Free Ohio's hype, liberal talk was not even an unknown format in the Akron area before they took to the airwaves: Air

America had just begun broadcasting on the independently-owned WJMP 1520 AM in nearby Kent only two weeks before. But soon after Radio Free Ohio's progressive talk replaced the Fox Sports content on 1350 AM, WJMP dropped Air America for . . . you guessed it, Fox Sports Radio. So, after all the bogus messages from fake pirates pushing for change, and all the talk of revolution, Northeastern Ohio has exactly the same radio choices it had before. The only difference is that Clear Channel is now the sole provider of progressive radio in the Akron market.

That, however, is cause for alarm. Unlike a community station that broadcasts what they actually believe, market-based corporate programming will allow another format to replace this one the moment it proves unprofitable. That's the difference between marketing the revolution and actually creating it. ©

According to linguists, some 70 percent of the world's population is bilingual. However, with most languages having only a few thousand speakers, most will likely become extinct by the end of the century. With Anglo-American globalization spreading over the globe, some punks have started going against the grain by using their indigenous languages as a medium of communication. With so many punk bands from non-English speaking countries choosing to sing in English—is this the ultimate statement in punk rock? Certainly Oi Polloi and Mill a h-Uile Rud think so. Both bands, one from Scotland and one from Seattle, joined forces recently to promote Scottish Gaelic on a European tour.

Dè tha dol? (What's going on?)

April saw for the first time ever two rock bands of any kind take to the road in Europe to sing in, speak, and promote the indigenous and endangered language of Scotland. Scottish Gaelic is famed for its ancient song and poetry, but little contemporary art has been produced in Gaelic. With only the Scottish rock giants Runrig writing contemporary new material in Gaelic, it's been left to punk bands to give Scotland's youth something to shout about in Gaelic.

It might not come as a surprise that Scotland's veteran punk legends Oi Polloi got the ball rolling but what has really aroused interest in Scotland is the fact that another group, Mill a h-Uile Rud (*Destroy Everything*), who sing entirely in Gaelic hail, from Seattle, Washington. Most of Mill a h-Uile Rud's lyrics deal with sex, which has caused ripples within Gaelic speaking Scotland because, until recently, it that culture has been very religiously conservative.

"When we learned Gaelic, we formed a Gaelic singing band without considering it strange or weird in any way. It's much more fun singing in Gaelic and the planet is full of English language bands. We wanted to support a minority language that is endangered instead of just foisting more English on the world" says Tim Armstrong from Mill a h-Uile Rud.

Past Oi Polloi LPs have shown Gaelic influences, with songs such as "Clachan Chalanais" and "Sios leis a' Ghnìomhachais Mhòir" ("Down With Big Business"), but two years ago, the band decided to change tongues after 20 years of singing in English. "We thought it very important to use our language in our music as we've always believed in supporting and encouraging minority cultures as diversity is both good and precious. At a time when multi-national companies are publicly saying that they want things to be identical the world over, it is important to fight against this. We don't believe it would be good for everyone in the world to speak English—that would be a nightmare!" Ruairidh MacAilein, Oi Polloi's singer explains.

Beagan eachdraidh (A little history)

Scottish Gaelic is part of the Celtic branch of the Indo-European languages, which includes Irish Gaelic, Welsh, Breton, Manx and Cornish. It is one of the world's 6000 languages that linguists believe will die out within the next century. Like many other minority tongues, it has suffered state-sanctioned oppression in its history. Gaelic was the language of the first people known as Scots and the official language of government until the 12th century, when

it was supplanted by Anglo-Saxon and suffered from disuse as England and Anglicised Scots gained control of the country. The notorious Highland Clearances, in which whole communities were ethnically cleansed to make way for sheep farming, further eroded the language by sending hundreds of thousands of Scots to the New World. Until the 1970s there were incidents in which Gaelic-speaking schoolchildren in the Highlands and Islands were physically punished for speaking their native language, even when they knew no English. Today, the strongest Gaelic-speaking communities are to be found in the Western Isles and Highlands of Scotland as well in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. The number of learners is growing with a lot of interest in Canada, the US, New Zealand, and Germany.

In the last 30 years successive governments have accepted Gaelic and it now enjoys use in the Scottish Parliament. A dedicated radio station and a few hours of television in Gaelic also indicate resurgent interest and acceptance. Thanks to the work of scholars like Noam Chomsky, the benefits of bilingualism are being recognized, and some of the most noticeable success of the movement to reinvigorate Gaelic has happened in the realm of education. There are now Gaelic-medium school units throughout the country, even in places where the language hasn't been spoken for hundreds of years, such as Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Despite gains in media, education and government policy towards Gaelic, the Gaelic community's development of lively contemporary culture is still in its early stages. This is where bands like Oi Polloi and Mill a h-Uile Rud come in. Most Gaelic music today is of the traditional and folk variety, and almost of all of it was written by dead poets.

"When I was in Finland recently I read about a hip-hop singer there, AMOC, who hails from Inari in the Saami district where there are only 400 people left who speak his dialect of the Saami language. It's in this language that he raps—it's excellent and lots of youngsters are now learning the language just because they enjoy his music and because it something new and attractive rather than what they see as old fashioned and boring," says Ruairidh of Oi Polloi.

New Gaelic-speaking bands give the language a vibrant and exciting new stage. It encourages young people who speak Gaelic to use it and those who don't to take an interest in the language. This has already happened in Wales with old punk bands such as Anhrefn giving rise to contemporary popular acts like Super Furry Animals and Catatonia.

Punc na Gàidhlig air chuairt (Gaelic punk on tour)

Taking their cue from the Welsh and their minority language heroes like Anhrefn, Oi Polloi and Mill a h-Uile Rud have decided not only to sing in Gaelic but to actively use it in daily conversation and in publicity. These actions have already influenced another young Scottish punk band, Atomgevitter, whose members are learning and using Gaelic as well.

Recently Mill a h-Uile Rud travelled to Scotland for a few gigs, including one in the Gaelic-speaking heartland of the Isle of Lewis where they played to a young and appreciative audience of some 150 out of an island population of under 20,000. The also played a session for BBC Radio nan Gaidheal, which in the

island's capital Stornoway, and broadcast nationally. After a gig in Edinburgh, Mill a h-Uile Rud and Oi Polloi set off for a nine-day 11-gig tour in Belgium, Holland, Germany, and Poland. Aonghas MacLeòid, young Gaelic poet from the Isle of Skye, accompanied them and distributed information on and in Gaelic. Increasing interest in the nascent Gaelic Punk movement persuaded BBC Television to follow Mill a h-Uile Rud on the tour for a forthcoming program about the band.

The militancy and DIY ethic of Oi Polloi and Mill a h-Uile Rud are something that have been lacking in the struggle for the Gaelic language. Unlike the Gaels' Celtic cousins in Wales and the six counties of Northern Ireland, Gaels have never resorted to widespread illegal actions nor grassroots direct action. In Wales, language militants have gained the upper hand over wealthy

English settlers who buy up housing and change linguistic demographics. In Northern Ireland, when Gaelic-speaking parents were denied a school for their children, they simply bought a caravan and set up their own. The DIY ethic embraced by Oi Polloi and Mill a h-Uile Rud offers a similar, non-combative approach.

Dè a-nis? (What now?)

Mill a h-Uile Rud's first seven-track CD has been received with acclaim and much interest in Scotland, despite its recording on a limited budget. With BBC radio interviews and a session behind them plans are now afoot for Mill a h-Uile Rud and possibly Oi Polloi to showcase Gaelic punk at the well-renowned Celtic Connections festival, which is Scotland's third largest festival, attracting thousands of people to various venues in Glasgow every January. This will be the first time that Celtic music outside the folk genre will be presented. Oi Polloi will soon release a split EP with Israeli band Nikmat Olalim, on which will be a Gaelic track "Deiseal is Deònach", a song that deals with Israel/Palestine situation. A new all-Gaelic Oi Polloi LP is being put together and a Scottish 4-band EP called "An Cruinneachadh" ("The Gathering"), featuring Oi Polloi, Mill a h-Uile Rud, Atomgevitter, and a Gaelic techno act, is due out soon.

If the popularity of Gaelic punk music grows much more, punk fans alone will save the forgotten language from extinction. ©

BY SEONAI DH ADAMS

**With so many
punk bands from non-English
speaking countries singing
in English—is going Gaelic
the ultimate statement
in punk rock?**



On May 20, 2004, the US Army did something all but unthinkable during wartime: it shut down recruitment offices around the country.

The day-long suspension of operations was meant to address recent allegations of ethical lapses in signing on recruits. Accusations of misconduct—including incidents of a recruiter helping a student procure a fake diploma and pass a drug test in Colorado and a Texas recruiter allegedly threatening to arrest a young man if he didn't enlist—received broad media coverage. What didn't garner as much coverage was why Army recruiters had employed such aggressive tactics in the first place: fewer people are signing up for military service.

Desperate to meet minimum quotas, recruiters say they are feeling heat from top brass. More fresh troops, not fewer, are required if the occupations in Iraq and Afghanistan are to be sustained. New incentives are on the table for volunteers—among them a \$20,000 signing bonus and a shortened 15-month tour of duty—but the number of actual new recruits still remains meager. The target figure for 2005 was 80,000 new soldiers by September; the Pentagon says that, even after increasing the number of recruiters in recent months, only 55,207 have enlisted as of August 2005.

Recruiters are blaming parents for discouraging their adult children to enlist—many of whom, according to separate polls, are turning against the handling of the war overall. A recent Gallup Poll found that only 52 percent of adults surveyed would support their child's decision to join the military.

For individuals of recruitment age, the price of enlistment is evidently perceived as too high. With a casualty count of 1,846 soldiers killed as of August 2005 and thousands more injured, many aren't inclined to risk personal harm in combat—that is, unless forced by law to do so. In other words: a draft.

With a strained military stretched thinner by the month, manpower options are narrowing. Lawmakers may soon have to weigh an imperative question: in a War on Terror with no perceived end, and with further military engagements possible in the future, will conscription need to be revived to keep the armed forces sufficiently staffed?

Opponents of the draft (including, at present, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld) argue that conscription is the least efficient—perhaps even most damaging—means of filling the ranks, particularly with the public backlash that the Vietnam Era lottery system would generate. Supporters claim the draft carries innumerable benefits despite its fundamental revocation of individual liberty.

The ethical divisions of a draft are as profound as any in a democracy: whether or not the government has the right to force an individual to sacrifice his or her life for the welfare of the state. But with only a finite number of plausible options to deal with troop shortages, the White House, Congress, and the Pentagon may be forced to confront the issue.

For public approval, and to iron out the blatant inequities of previous forms of mandatory service, new ideas about conscription are emerging; as the saying goes, this isn't your father's draft. If a "new draft" comes to pass, its core elements will be unprecedented

in America's history of conscription, and its broad appeal could make it an offer the American public can't refuse.

FORCED INTO A CORNER

By any analysis, the US Army is overtaxed. As of June 30, 2005, the Department of Defense states the total Army force is composed of 489,971 people (of the combined military's 1.4 million total personnel), with more than 150,000 active-duty, reserve, and National Guard soldiers serving in Iraq. This, according to many experts, isn't enough.

"Bush's doctrine of preemptive war demands a constant supply of troops, and a much larger Army than what we have now," wrote Princeton University economist Paul Krugman in the *New York Times* in 2004. "A study commissioned by Donald Rumsfeld arrived at the same conclusion as every independent study: the US has 'inadequate total numbers' of troops to sustain operations at the current pace."

Moreover, a growing chorus of bipartisan voices and military analysts insists Iraq needs more troops to stabilize the country—or depart altogether. The light army that invaded both countries, the logic goes, can't be expected to properly build, police, and lay the governmental foundation of a nation—much less vacate Iraq with a lasting stability.

Morale among soldiers in Iraq is strained. Prolonged service for some was ratcheted up at a time when fewer are expected to make a career in the service than their counterparts in previous years. Some shortages are being covered by private military contractors, although that option is neither the cheapest, most practical, or most ethical alternative.

The Army has used National Guard members and reservists to fill the gaps, something John Kerry, during the presidential election debates, called a "backdoor draft." Relying on the National Guard and reserves to fill out troop numbers has caused extended stays and brought injuries and casualties to dismayed communities at home. "As it pertains to the National Guard, we were woefully under-equipped before the war started," said Lt. Gen. Steven Blum, chief of the National Guard Bureau, to the House Armed Services Committee in January. "It . . . gets a little bit worse every day."

With no stated timetable to end the occupation of Iraq, and as evidence of a military stretched thin grows even as President Bush rattles sabers with North Korea, Iran, and Syria—the talk of conscription quietly begins.

A 21st CENTURY DRAFT

Re-launching the draft isn't an easy process: Congress must pass a bill through both houses, then the president must sign it. Currently, the possibility of Congress considering a draft bill seems remote, as the topic is still reviled from its last incarnation during the Vietnam era (terminated by Richard Nixon in 1973).

Democratic US Rep Charles Rangel, NY, a decorated Korean War veteran and critic against the Iraq war, made headlines when he introduced a bill for draft reinstatement in January 2003. By all accounts it was regarded as a political effort to target Republican hawks, and was trounced 402-2 in the House.



IT'S GETTIN' DRAFTY

As the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan continue to intensify, the armed forces are finding new recruits harder to come by. With few answers as to how to fill the gap, are the days of an all-volunteer army coming to an end?

— By Jon Resh —

In describing mandatory service, however, the bill made two important distinctions from the Vietnam draft: there would be no deferments for college, and both men and women would be forced to join. In the same month, Democratic US Sen Fritz Hollings, SC, introduced a similar bill with a further twist: the two-year service could be served in the armed forces or "in a civilian capacity that, as determined by the president, promotes the national defense, including national or community service and homeland security."

In this form, conscientious objectors wouldn't have to join the military at all, but would simply provide service "that does not include any combatant training component." The bill was shelved upon Hollings' retirement at the end of 2004.

Other politicians who brought up the draft thereafter—particularly in last year's charged election atmosphere—were all but pilloried for their candor. Republican US Sen Chuck Hagel, NE, said in a widely reported Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing: "Why shouldn't we ask all of our citizens to bear some responsibility and pay some price?" His legislative cohorts responded with the standard derision.

While campaigning for the presidency, John Kerry said, "If George Bush were to be re-elected—given the way that he has gone about this war, and given the avoidance of responsibility in North Korea, Iran, and other places—[a draft] is possible." But media reaction was so dismissive that Kerry soon dropped the subject. (In the post-election analysis, some felt Kerry could have spotlighted the draft question to gain the vote of a sizable demographic group—voters 18–24 years of age—the way the Republican Party exploited the issue of gay marriage.)

Otherwise, the subject seemed very much an unspoken behemoth, a topic of crucial significance but little substantial discussion.

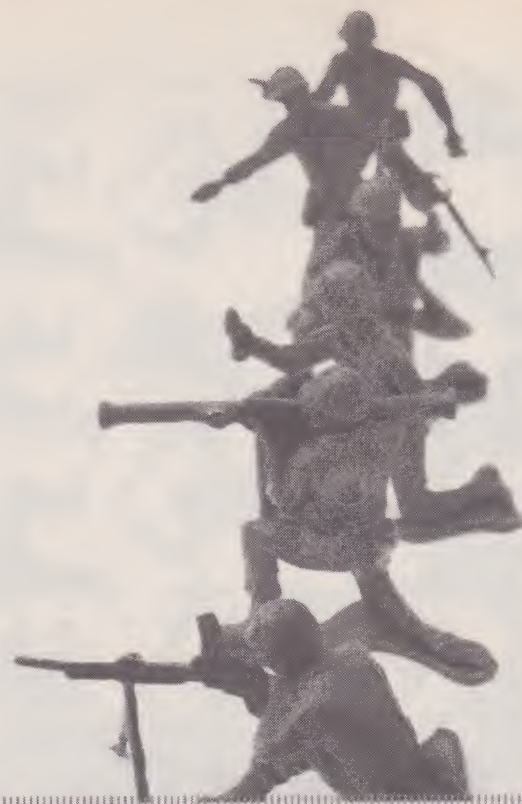
In March 2005, the influential policy magazine *Washington Monthly* ran a cover story called "More Boots on the Ground: The Case for the Draft" by editor-in-chief Paul Glastri and attorney Philip Carter, a former Army captain. The article detailed how a more equitable draft could be designed.

According to the authors, this draft would draw from all economic strata instead of the disproportionate pool of minorities and the poor. It would constantly inject the government and military with a roster of young men and women. And, like Hollings' bill, this plan would offer other options to any individual who refused to participate in warfare.

When the story hit the streets, the idea of a draft that offered non-military service surely raised eyebrows among politicians, academics, strategists, and others who ponder the military's enlistment problems, given that such a measure could soften public opinion about the draft. Some of Glastri's and Carter's points are similar to conscription systems in Europe, hinging on four main concepts:

- **All males and females over the age of 18 would complete a one- to two-year term of service.** Glastri and Carter suggest the government impose a requirement that no four-year college or university would allow a student to enter without serving first.

- **There would be no deferments.** College deferments would end. Persons with disabilities would be offered jobs that fit their capability as aids, teachers, administrators, nurses, etc.



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- **Varying amounts of college tuition would be provided by the government in return for the service.** This would be allotted based on the amount of risk and sacrifice inherent in the sector: military service would receive a full GI Bill-type college grant, while service in other sectors would merit fewer funds.

- **Individuals would have a choice of three sectors in which to serve: military, homeland security, or national service.** This last point is arguably the most critical and innovative reform. Every draftee would be able to select whether they would be assigned to the armed forces, security detail (such as border patrol, immigration, port guard, etc.), or an AmeriCorps-type program (tutoring and teaching, conservation and upkeep, community services, medical and senior care, etc.).

Such freedom of choice would, from the surface, appear to present a more fair, just conscription system. Conscientious objection would seemingly be moot. Additionally, without deferments, the racial and economic imbalance that has been a widely perceived flaw of the all-volunteer military would be eliminated; people from all classes and ethnicities would serve together. The Population Reference Bureau and the *New York Times* report Afri-

can-Americans comprise about 22 percent of enlisted personnel (including half of all women in the Army), but only make up 12.7 percent of the US population.

From a public-relations standpoint, the educational spending on college for each draftee could be this plan's silver bullet. It would stand as the government's assurance that every young citizen would have at least some money for continuing education, perhaps putting more people through college.

This education factor, along with the free-choice aspect, could surely win wide favor from the American public. As it is, such a draft would most likely have the strongest backing among a broad conservative bloc, given their traditional support of military participation. Eliminating deferments would increase minority support, as it would ease the burden of military losses on their communities. Centrists would be satisfied that the military was well-stocked with motivated, dedicated soldiers, while all other draftees would work in other areas of need. The option for peaceful national service, nullifying conscientious objector arguments while contributing to socially beneficial programs through the federal government, would likely win favor among moderate liberals. Leaving only the hard left, libertarian right, and pacifistic groups in opposition to the proposal on moral grounds, a sizable majority would probably favor such reform.

Left-wing resistance might be met with the conservative case that, if European countries' political and social choices are to be emulated (as liberals often maintain), this would be one European model worth adopting. If liberals were to lobby for this new draft, a primary point (that Rangel made) is that America's poor and disadvantaged shouldn't be subjected to war in such high percentages. Populists would champion the fact that the elite, intellectual, and scholarly would gain a true sense of national service, working (or fighting) side-by-side with people from other backgrounds.

As repugnant as the thought of conscription may be to many, this form of draft would fill the ranks without forcing anyone to pick up a rifle. Glastris, in an August 9 interview with *Punk Planet*, emphasizes the service rather than the military aspect of such a plan. The military should remain an all-volunteer force, he says; such a system would only enhance the existing quantity of soldiers. "Again, it's a mandatory national service with a voluntary military option," he says. "If you get one guy to join the military, and a million to teach in poor schools and help old people, the military is still one guy better off, and the country is a million people better off."

From the Pentagon's standpoint, a large, constantly replenished force could be mobilized in a systematic manner for any mission, ensuring manpower in all situations; it would also loosen the reliance on reservists, National Guard members, and contractors. Such a draft could streamline budget allocations, with expected costs per soldier to be about the same each year. And, debatably, it could provide greater civic and national pride among young adult Americans, a popular theme on the mainstream political wishlist.

A likely benefit is that such a draft would imbue Americans with a greater awareness of how the government manages and deploys its military. A common criticism of the Bush Administration is its willingness to wage wars when few members of the administration have served themselves. With a personal stake in the nation's military—whether as a draftee, family member, or veteran—citizens may

be more deeply connected and have a greater voice in how policies are executed. "I believe that if those calling for war knew their children were more likely to be required to serve—and to be placed in harm's way—there would be more caution and a greater willingness to work with the international community in dealing with Iraq," Rangel wrote in a 2002 op-ed in the *New York Times*.

One potential improvement is that such a revised draft could solve motivation and decorum problems exhibited by drafted soldiers in the past. A standard argument against compulsory service—passionately voiced by veterans and members of the Department of Defense, including Secretary Rumsfeld—is that the draft produces sloppy, undisciplined corps who, in their forced conscription, have no stake in their missions, their cohorts, or their integrity. This revised system would be designed to reward and maintain that personal dedication, since those who signed up for the military chose to do so above other service sectors.

Still, many view draftees as the dregs of the armed forces. According to the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Rumsfeld said, after deferments from fighting in the Vietnam War were given to college students, "what was left was sucked into the intake, trained for a period of months, and then went out, adding no value, no advantage, really, to the United States armed services over any sustained period of time because of the churning that took place."

Rumsfeld quickly apologized to veterans for the statement, but it certainly reflects a predominant belief—particularly in regard to current requirements for high-tech training. "The dumb grunt is an anachronism," wrote Nathaniel Fick, a former Marine captain who served in Afghanistan, in the *New York Times*. "He has been replaced by the strategic corporal. Immense firepower and improved technology have pushed decision-making with national consequences down to individual enlisted men."

Drafted soldiers simply wouldn't have enough time to make the transition, Fick says. The training alone could take up to a year and a half. Even if the draftees who picked the military option were as motivated and committed as enlisted men, they may never be able to learn the job in time.

Thus draftees are viewed as a bad investment on the military's part, especially since few retain careers in the service. Better to present recruitment bonuses for enlisted personnel—higher pay, shorter durations, relaxed requirements—than resort to pulling in the average Joe or Jane who never had any intention of being a soldier.

But that, to be sure, is only the first of many arguments against a draft, even a reformed one.

THE ABUNDANCE OF DOWNSIDES

At press time, the Department of Defense (DOD) and the White House both vigorously denied that a draft was being considered. Rumsfeld, who admitted in a Senate hearing that the US military is "clearly stressed," memorably said on CNN in April: "I think the only people who could conceivably be talking about a draft are people who are speaking from pinnacles of near-perfect ignorance."

Following suit, the DOD couldn't state their position on the matter more clearly. Spokesperson Lt. Col. Ellen Krenke tells *Punk Planet*: "We don't need a draft." The DOD website plainly

states: "We oppose a draft." In a letter to the House Chairman of the Committee on Armed Services, Rumsfeld states: "We are capable of attracting and retaining the people we need, through the proper use of pay and other incentives."

Few politicians would argue. From their angle, the mere mention of a draft—much less its implementation—is an enormous gamble with the likely result of political suicide. Among the many difficult questions that any member of Congress must take into account when considering mandatory service:

- **Were all other options for filling military positions exhausted?** Tactical alternatives exist besides raising recruitment incentives and calling reservists to duty, such as cooperating with other allies and the UN in assisting our armed operations.

- **Would a draft create a strong culture of opposition against the war, as it did in the 1960s?** This would be a dominant concern among both election-minded representatives as well as the public at large, even for the most equitable systems of mandatory service.

- **Would the cost of a draft greatly exceed its need?** Retired Air Force sergeant and military author Rod Powers estimated a very rough, ballpark prediction of costs for a military draft, based on 22 million men and women between the ages of 18 and 26. Yearly payroll alone, he calculated, would be at least \$150 billion a year (with a pay cut), and added food costs could total around \$39 billion. This doesn't take into account the expense of training, clothing, equipment, relocation, administration, and management, and the infinite miscellany for which the military must pay. (Nor do those figures include the other two sectors of service.)

- **What if the homeland security and national service sectors are glutted during the draft, with no one choosing the military option?** If such a system were in place, there's the probability—especially in the midst of war—that the majority of draftees would stay out of harm's way by avoiding the military in favor of the other sectors. (The *Washington Monthly* article confidently states that enough young adults would choose the military option "out of patriotism, a sense of adventure, or to test their mettle," which seems a rather optimistic forecast.) If the draft rules are suddenly changed—such that, for instance, the homeland security and national service options are revoked—fallout from the public, sensing a swindle, could be severe.

Glastris, however, points out that a multi-sector service program, if implemented before any extreme military crises, could keep a traditional military draft from being instituted, since a greater number of troops would already be provided. "Far less likely that you'd get a [standard] draft if you have a program like this than if you didn't," he says.

In the Pentagon's view there's a boggling array of logistical difficulties to overcome in renewing a draft:

- **Would conscription terms take too long—then last not long enough—to be effective?** In previous drafts, the process requires, at minimum, 193 days to register the first inductee, then one to two years of training. Given that a term of service would likely be two years at most, such a duration may be too short for much effective use, particularly in the midst of war.

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- **With such a massive influx of draftees each year, how can the military effectively determine every individual's specialization?** Given the more precise, technological nature of today's military, finding the right slot for each new individual (now assigned by the Armed Forces Vocational Aptitude Battery test) among the millions in constant rotation could be a major obstacle.

- **If it's a universal mandatory draft for all young Americans, which citizens wouldn't serve?** Inmates, drug offenders, dropouts, and a multitude of others currently can't enter the military. How and if those criteria might be revised would surely be a source of debate.

- **Would a draft lower military standards?** One school of thought maintains that a public influx will invariably lower the caliber of the armed forces, regardless of whether the draftee is choosing the military over other service sectors. As a functional institution of defense, the military is not an educational, patriotism-building exercise for the masses, according to draft opponents. "Renewing the draft would be a blow against the men and women in uniform, a dumbing down of the institution they serve," Fick wrote. "The United States military exists to win battles, not to test social policy. We cannot all pick up the sword, nor should we be forced to—but we owe our support to those who do."

Above all else remains the moral ramification of conscription—whether or not citizens should be bound to serve the state with their lives:

- **Is reinstating even a reformed draft worth the most significant government intrusion into the personal lives of American citizens in two generations?** Is such enforcement permissible in a democracy? What social shifts would result?

- **Why should a draft—or any mandatory service—be enacted if no mention of conscription is found in the Constitution?** This is the classic libertarian argument: when America is threatened militarily, its citizenry will take arms as needed, without laws telling us to do so. That, say opponents, was the logic of the founding fathers. The Constitution states: "We, the people . . . [shall] provide for the common defence . . . To declare War, grant Letters of Marque and Reprisal . . . [and] to raise and support Armies." (Exactly how the armies in



question should be raised and supported is never specified.)

- **Could a greater source of expendable manpower through compulsory service potentially lead to reckless military engagements?** Rather than making the public more sensitive to how young Americans are fighting for the country, it is possible that, given the abundant supply of soldiers, a draft could spawn more militaristic policies and actions.

- **Would a constant influx of fresh troops further our image as a military war machine in countries abroad?** A recent pacifistic argument, this question concerns the degradation of America's already battered image worldwide, potentially producing yet more distrust and resentment against the US as an unyielding superpower.

- **Can mandatory service truly "force" patriotism and national pride on anyone?** The Vietnam War proved that service—especially if viewed as abused or manipulated by its leadership—does not assure civic loyalty, devotion, or obligation. The reality, in fact, can be exactly the opposite.

- **During a term of mandatory service, what personal information would be collected about each individual?** A fundamental privacy concern: all draftees could conceivably submit to DNA sampling, fingerprinting, retina scanning, and other forms of identity documentation when inducted and processed. If a storing house were assembled, this information could be retained in a federal database and kept for the entirety of the draftee's life.

- **Will there be any social or institutional prejudice against people who choose to serve in service sectors other than the military?** Will employers, for instance, be more likely to hire a person who spent their time in the military rather than other sectors (as has purportedly been the case on occasion in European countries)? Should the government implement safeguards against such bias?

- **Is the European draft model really applicable to the United States?** In smaller countries like Denmark, Bulgaria, or Norway, there are reasons for mandatory conscription beyond packing the barracks. Constant readiness is the only way a smaller nation's army can quickly mobilize, and a continuous standing military population is the only means to afford expensive weaponry and supplies.

- **How can a president who evidently took aims to avoid the draft by entering the National Guard reinstate it himself?** While it's President Bush's fundamental prerogative as commander-in-chief to sign conscription into law, the apparent hypocrisy of such a move would surely create resentment among some segment of Americans.

In the end, beyond all moral and logistical objections, it will probably be the political unpopularity of a draft that will keep any form of it from recurring, at least until troop depletion and military engagement hit near-calamitous levels. "I think that the likelihood [of a draft] is still very low," Glastris says. "The only thing likely to change that is if a presidential candidate in the next couple of years makes this his or her big issue. Then you gear up the whole machinery of polling and focus groups and think tanks and op-eds."

While the common assumption is that the traditionally more pro-military Republican Party would push for mandatory service, it could be an advantageous campaign issue for Democrats, particularly candidates seeking a defense-friendly platform. It was, after all, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Lyndon B. Johnson—two Democratic icons—who initiated the previous two drafts.

"Nobody thinks the Democrats are going to use the draft to stuff a bunch of soldiers into cannon fodder for a war they don't support," Glastris says. "Whereas the Republicans have an increasingly unpopular war around their necks. I think it's a lot more difficult for them to get behind this, as well as the anti-statist strain that runs in the Republican party."

Nonetheless, according to Glastris, low-pitched support for such measures may be growing in Washington's corridors of power. "I think a lot of very powerful people now know the argument. I have had some conversations with a number of senior elected officials and candidates and they express guarded, qualified interest. But I've not persuaded anybody to come out in favor of it, and the military won't touch this. There's not an inkling of support about it within the Pentagon. The Pentagon was also against getting rid of the draft; they're only going to support what they're already doing."

Despite the Pentagon's intransigence, the shortage of personnel still shows few signs of ending, and the war in Iraq shows little sign of abating. If both get worse, demands for more drastic solutions may be made. Given that the course of the war in Iraq, the War on Terror, and the Bush "preemptive strike" doctrine all seem to be open-ended engagements, demanding military incursion without stated contingent or exit strategies, the shortfall in troops may continue and perhaps worsen. If a solution tailored to the public's benefit is to be created, the American citizenry can't afford to deny this dilemma or avoid discussing it much longer.

"Those who are worrying about a revived draft are in the same position as those who worried about a return to budget deficits four years ago, when President Bush began pushing through his program of tax cuts," Paul Krugman wrote in the *New York Times*. Bush had insisted he wouldn't thrust the budget into deficit spending (it has since grown to more than \$400 billion, the greatest in US history), just as he says he wouldn't enact a draft. "But the facts suggest that he will." ©



HOME BREWED BYTES

BY BRETT CAMPER

ILLUSTRATION BY NADINE NAKANISHI

AMATEUR VIDEO GAME DEVELOPMENT IS NOTHING NEW, BUT AS THE COMMERCIAL INDUSTRY CONSOLIDATES, A NEW COMMUNITY OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA PRODUCERS IS EMERGING.

Gaming aesthetics are popping up all over—in bands that cover 1980s game songs like the Minibosses and the Advantage [Static, PP62], in the pixel art of design groups eBoy ["Reboot!", PP59], in Raina Lee's zine I-Up (www.iup-zine.com), and at the recent i am 8-bit show at Gallery 1988 in Los Angeles. But left to ponder the kitsch of retro game graphics and chiptunes, independent producers are wondering: what about indie games?

The act of game development has been largely off of the DIY media radar. The game industry today is as alarmingly commercialized and consolidated as film, music, and publishing. To someone facing rows of shelves of *Grand Theft Auto* and *Halo* at Electronics Boutique or Best Buy, the industry seems a monolithic giant. But a slew of independent game developers are out there: some try to fix the closed-off distribution networks that limit our notion of available games to those put out by a few corporations, while others just have fun banging out their own games in the garage or bedroom—or sometimes at their dayjobs.

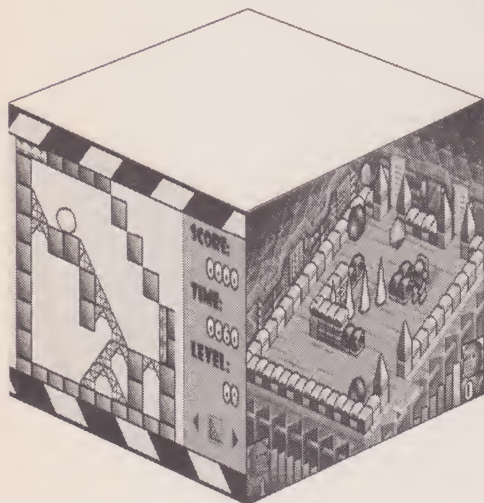
As an indie game maker myself, I know that these coders have the same drives, and face many of the same problems, as in other forms of alternative media. They are frustrated with narrow-minded commercial offerings, a lack of access to production tools courtesy of hostile corporate policies, and an ambivalent relationship to professionals. It's time we paid attention to these concerns. The greater indie community should bring them into the fold—into debate, education, and activism. In the '50s, a moral panic over violence and sexuality in comics led to the creation of the Comics Code Authority and a decades-long policy of censorship that stifled experimentation in the form until it was revived by underground artists. Today the very same hot-button issues threaten games. Until they grow artistically, games will continue to be the target of short-sighted politicians. But this will only happen when access to game production is open. We need indie games now.

Homebrew and the Game Boy Advance

Nintendo's handheld Game Boy Advance (GBA) system is one of the most popular game machines of all time, with over 65 million sold through the end of 2004. Its pocket-friendly clamshell design is a common sighting on a commute through any major city. So it's unsurprising that the machine has attracted a substantial community of amateur, independent developers—"homebrewers" as they're known. The moniker's roots lie in the Palo Alto-area Homebrew Computer Club of the 1970s, the birthplace of the personal computer and staging grounds for the first battles between future behemoths Bill Gates and Steve Jobs. Recent homebrew Game Boy amateurs have released hundreds of games and other software through online community websites. Unfortunately, as with zines, minicomics, and other DIY productions, there's no formal catalog of these works.

It's a different situation than with online Flash-based games, which anyone can make and play on a PC or Mac. The GBA is a proprietary system that only plays Game Boy-specific games. And Nintendo keeps that system "closed": the coding and access to GBA game design tools is secret, and revealed only to select development teams, official licensees who must purchase development kits for thousands of dollars. Nintendo controls every aspect of the GBA market, from the initial green-lighting of projects, to approval of artwork and packaging, to stringent pre-order requirements which put the burden of economic risk on the developer while reserving substantial royalty rates for themselves, the corporate parent. Homebrew GBA development operates underground, without Nintendo's consent.

Homebrew is a legal grey area. Because GBA games come on small, dedicated plastic cartridges, about two inches wide, even getting an unofficial game to boot on the machine is a first hurdle. Amateur developers and fans purchase third-party "flash cards," special hardware devices that allow game files to be transferred between the GBA and standard personal computers. But because they



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MANY GBA HOMEBREW GAMES ADOPT THE 2D VISUAL STYLES
OF OLDER GAMING PLATFORMS. *CLACQ* (PUZZLE), LEFT,
AND *SPACE TWINS* (PUZZLE/ACTION), RIGHT.

are just conduits for data, flash cards are not limited to legal, creative homebrew uses: they also enable software pirates to simply copy pre-existing commercial games wholesale. Flash cards do for GBA games what a CD burner does for music. For Nintendo, focused on protecting its own high margins, it's easiest to ignore this nuance of intent and simply label these devices illegal, sweeping legitimate, independent homebrew developers quietly under the rug with the pirates. To minimize the chances of being crushed by a corporate lawsuit, flash cards are manufactured in China and sold through Hong Kong-based stores online.

Whether it's a case of Nintendo's corporate convenience, close-mindedness, or open hostility toward competitors, hobbyists in the homebrew scene are left to reverse engineer and tinker with the system's hardware to get at the knowledge and equipment they need. Websites like gbadev.org, the hub of unofficial Game Boy Advance development, are crucial for the exchange of such "hacked" technical information. Homebrewers are in fact partly driven by this desire for the forbidden. But it is also the system's inherent technical limitations in comparison to today's "modern" computers, the challenge of getting such a small machine to get up and go. Homebrew also finds a special, retro appeal in the system's 2D-based graphics, which gives an older visual and gameplay style reminiscent of the *Metroid* and the *Legend of Zelda* adventures homebrewers grew up with.

In many ways, GBA homebrew developers are just the latest in a long line of indie mechanical and electronics hobby communities, from the "radio boys" of the turn of the century (a gender bias which persists today), to the garage rock and hot-rodding movements of the 1950s and '60s, to the creation of the original Apple computer in the mid-'70s. But the web has replaced the airwaves over which radio enthusiasts shared advice and boasted of technical accomplishments. Online, GBA coders seek and offer help in solving each others' programming problems from overcoming mundane setup errors to harnessing obscure and complex features of the

GBA's graphics hardware. They exchange messages on web-based discussion boards throughout the day, sneaking a bit of time at work or school, and continuing on well into the night.

The scene's highly technical (and esoteric) nature makes it a tightly knit group of insiders. Yet it is also a hobby with transient membership, and it welcomes serious outsiders. This ethos was explained by Grumpycat (as in most Internet chat rooms, homebrewers adopt pseudonyms online), a developer known for his GBA recreations of '80s games, such as the outer space payload-tugging *Thrust* for Commodore 64: "What makes it cool is that we're all enthusiastic. Beginners welcome—we all start somewhere . . . and when you get your first single color sprite on the display, moving up and down with the buttons, we'll all cheer you on." Like many other non-professional, open-source programming communities, GBA homebrew is egalitarian, a meritocracy irrespective of age: many GBA hobbyist developers are young, in college or high school.

Danish 16-year-old Jacob Kjær, AKA Lord Graga, is a stand-out member of the gbadev.org scene. In 2004, his games *Llamaboost* and *Fred Firefighter* received first and second place in major coding competitions (known in the scene as "compos"). Others are even younger: Dagamer34, a prolific contributor to online forum discussions, is a 14-year-old from Texas. There is, unsurprisingly, an infectious pride among these teenagers. Lord Graga playfully proclaimed "I am the king of the world. 16 years old on the first of May, and I have already won a compo :D."

The homebrew scene is a way for young hobbyists to learn the practice of programming outside of the cut-and-dried atmosphere of schools today, as Lord Graga reports: "I came into the GBA scene with no idea about C-coding, compilers, assemblers, registers, and so on . . . today I am pretty good . . . and I understand most of the GBA hardware completely."

As a high-school student, Lord Graga says he doesn't have any local friends who enjoy programming. Homebrewers find society

online—like Sajiimori, a college student who is a constant source of technical help to others on the gba.dev.org forums. He says he “started coding years ago when I moved to a new city and didn’t know anybody.” Demonstrations of technical skill generate reputation within the scene, or “egoboo” (short for ego boosting) as it is known in open-source development. This is no small achievement, either. Lord Graga: “I only do it for the pleasure of ‘geek respect.’”

Nostalgia and the Solo Coder

There are also scene members in their 20s, 30s, and older who are drawn to the GBA platform by nostalgia for single-person production. For these developers, a history of being locked out of the field by game industry consolidation stirs their passions as much as any desire for technological mastery. They want to make games, and they believe that, with GBA game development, one person still can. The rest of the current generation of home videogame consoles—Sony’s PlayStation 2, the Nintendo GameCube, and Microsoft’s Xbox—have become technically mind-boggling, and are out of reach of independent developers’ abilities. The primary concern of these nostalgic developers is a political—some would say philosophical—stance familiar to believers in DIY media: it’s not necessarily an interest in becoming professional game developers, but rather an underlying insistence that amateurs ought to stand shoulder to shoulder with the commercial industry.

When the Barbican Art Gallery in London curated the exhibition *Game On: The History and Culture of Videogames*, prominent indie PC game developer Eric Zimmerman contributed the story “Do Independent Games Exist?” railing: “The game industry is completely technofetishistic, with the value of games typically being judged on their technical merits . . . Games are complicated to produce and low-fi approaches are frowned upon. It’s possible for a band to record an album in a garage over a weekend. But not so with games.”

The shift from 2D to 3D-based graphics has especially pushed the barrier to entry for amateur development past a critical point. As *Zelda* and *Final Fantasy* jumped from the Super NES to the Nintendo 64 and PlayStation in the late ’90s, the mathematical prerequisites for graphical programming leave the arithmetic of low-level coding far behind. “I program the GBA because there is no real chance to program games for PCs unless you’re a real math freak,” says regular forum contributor Lupin.

But the homebrew scene is still driven by a desire for technical knowledge. So the concern today is not really about the technology becoming “too hard,” but instead about it becoming *too big*. The sheer scale of work required to power a machine like the PlayStation 2 makes the prospect of a successful amateur game produced by a single developer unthinkable. For many, the GBA provides a return to a “lost age” of one-man operations. As Marciano, an elder statesman in the scene describes:

I was a teen when the Commodore 64 was around, and my friends and I used to write games . . . Homebrew kids in their bedrooms and dorms don’t have a chance [today] . . . the march of technology is inevitable. 3D is coming big-time, and with it the art volume and the production costs are going to grow beyond the homebrew crowd again. The GBA, and this generation of homebrewers, may be the last time such a community comes together

with a real ability to demonstrate talent at a commercial level.

“I was too late for the days of 8-bit computing,” Sajiimori says, “and by the time I got started you had to compete with id Software [developers of *Doom* and *Quake*]. GBA seems like my last chance to participate in a market where simple but high-quality games are still viable.”

This deep personal concern over scale is at the heart of the DIY movement. We’ve seen it echoed recently in the rise of an indie comics movement that emphasizes individualistic production and control, in opposition to the team-driven “factory methods” of mainstream publishers like Marvel or DC. Even in games, there is nothing *new* about anxiety over increasing industry bureaucracy and production scope: in 1979, early programmers at Atari lamented its takeover by executives who knew nothing about games; in 1993, Sierra founder Ken Williams noted that the number of people credited on a typical project had already reached fifty. Today, that number can easily reach into the hundreds. As we know from 30 years of evolving rivalries in the punk community, this “if only it was like before” mentality is a familiar lament—a motivator that both rings true, yet idealizes the past.

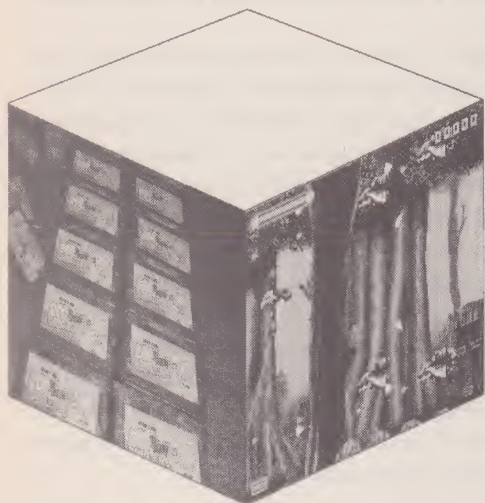
The 2004Mbit Compo: Challenging the Professional

When gba.dev.org announced their annual programming competition for 2004, it included an ambitious twist: instead of releasing entrants’ games online, for free download, they would manufacture and sell a GBA-compatible cartridge collecting the top selections. Suddenly, hobbyist projects became potential commodities. Perceptions of quality shifted: technical prowess, a cornerstone of reputation, was diminished in favor of how long a game might play. The stakes were raised as the members of this usually inward-facing group pondered a mode of distribution that could position themselves in front of a new, wider audience.

The scene wanted to prove itself: “If you’re going to publish a cart, I think it sets a whole new level of expectation for the quality of a compo game,” said Marciano. Tempers flared over contest rules, and anxieties percolated. One frustrated contestant complained: “Just because the games are going to be sold doesn’t mean that you can demand professional (read: expensive) quality.”

As the indie GBA scene grows up, it is starting to challenge the greater world of gaming. The majority of the younger student-aged amateurs see their homebrew experience as a chance to break into the “legitimate” industry. As Lord Graga wryly put it, “I plan to go pro, but it will probably be for a later handheld, since I still need nine years of education.” For nostalgic older members, GBA homebrew rejuvenates the “true” spirit of personal computing and programming.

Getting hired as a “legitimate” game developer is a tall order, often more difficult than breaking into movie or music production. Most aspiring programmers know that job listings at any reputable company are a catch-22: if you haven’t *already* demonstrated your hands-on experience with industry standard technologies, you don’t meet the minimum qualifications. Homebrew coding provides these skills, and recognition of this fact cuts both ways: several professional GBA development companies recruit (at no cost) on gba.dev.org, posting open job positions. It’s not yet



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HOMEBREW CARTRIDGES FROM GBADEV.ORG'S 2004MBIT COMPETITION. WORLD REBORN, A GAME WHICH MADE THE RARE MOVE FROM HOMEBREW TO COMMERCIAL RELEASE.

the continuous professional gateway that film students and fan filmmakers have cultivated on the web, but it's a helpful backdoor into an industry that otherwise demands a bachelor's degree in computer science, if not a master's in physics.

The homebrew game *World Reborn* is one of the first in the GBA scene to make the commercial jump: started by two college friends in Tennessee (a near dead-zone in professional game development), the fledgling company NeoPong (www.neopong.com) found a commercial publisher for what began as a hobbyist project.

Their advice? Old-fashioned persistence, says lead programmer Robert Dean: "Talk to every publisher you can. I mean bug them to death, call them, email them, get your product in their faces. But be professional about it and know when to call it quits on a publisher. Believe me, we got turned down many times but kept going until we found one that liked the game."

Despite—if not because of—the frustration over current industry practices, homebrewers see the success of *World Reborn* not as a sell out but as a positive development. Younger coders sat up and took notes, while the older nostalgia crowd felt satisfaction, not bitterness, at seeing one of their own "make it." Small, four or five man development companies like NeoPong are becoming the indie labels of gaming. It's not ideal: having to answer to a massive corporate gatekeeper like Nintendo still isn't as comforting as the more independent-friendly distributors available to a K Records in music, or a Drawn & Quarterly in comics. But NeoPong at least proves that dedicated outsiders can finagle their way into the commercial channel and make their work seen.

Taking a different tack, the 2004Mbit compo emerged as an internal sounding board and test case for scene debates over amateurism. The compo is *not* an attempt to become professional or for-profit: scene members voted in an online poll (by a large margin) to sell the resulting game cartridge at cost. In the scene's usual software-only mode of operations, there is

no limit on the number of games available for download. The digital exchange of games is an unconventional use of the GBA technology, a more "alternative" form than one that apes retail commercial sales through manufacture and distribution of a physical cartridge, box, and manual. So in some ways, the decision to produce a physical cart is a conservative one, moving the scene back towards the manufacturing restrictions of commercial production.

But the commodification of digital homebrew games in physical form has also proven a shrewd way of drawing attention to the scene. Within hours of its release, word of the 2004Mbit game cartridge spread to popular blogs like BoingBoing.net, and the limited production run of 500 copies sold out that day. Like local releases on 7" vinyl (and more recently, hand-pressed CD-Rs), the GBA homebrew scene is learning to harness the cult of collectibility and authenticity through the scarcity that has long been a hallmark of indie media. The exposure has brought the scene not money, but a feeling of permanence, establishment, and a voice within a larger online and offline world—as well as a surprisingly confident legal stand against Nintendo's stranglehold over GBA production.

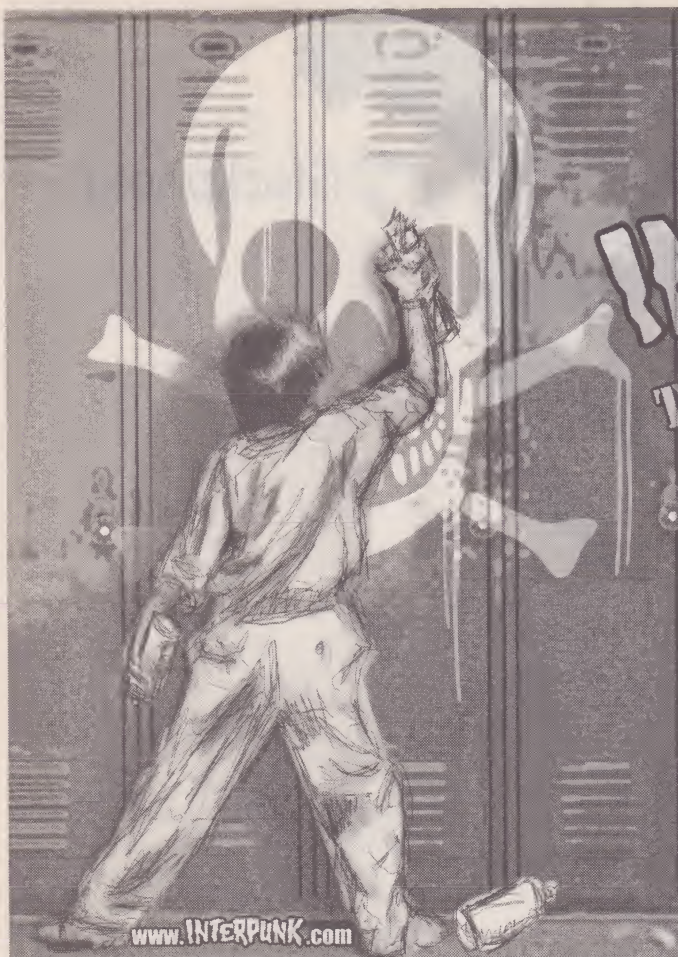
This move toward the physical product may represent only a brief detour in the growth of indie console game development communities—already enthusiasts have circumvented security measures in newer handhelds like Sony's PSP, allowing homebrew games to be easily downloaded to the machine, smoothing out the flash card distribution process that was clunky and sometimes costly on the Game Boy Advance. These technical advances are crucial, but the real breakthrough for game homebrewers will come when fellow DIY-ers in comics, music, film, and elsewhere do not turn up their noses at video games, nor treat them as raw cultural material to be transmuted into something cool, but rather recognize in them their own native potential for creative expression. ©



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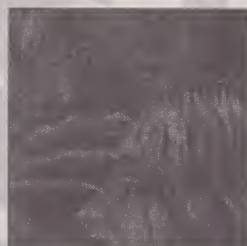
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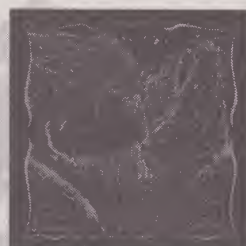
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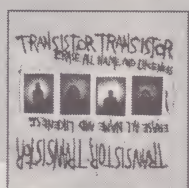
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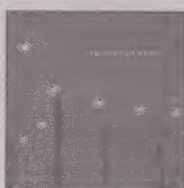
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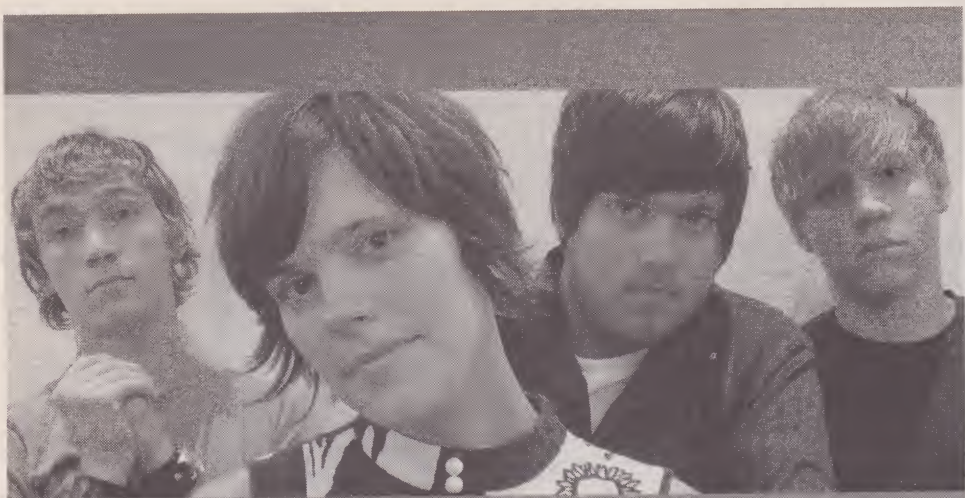
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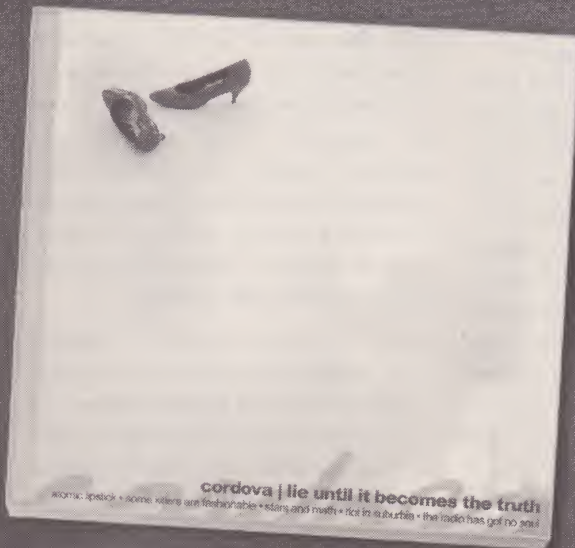


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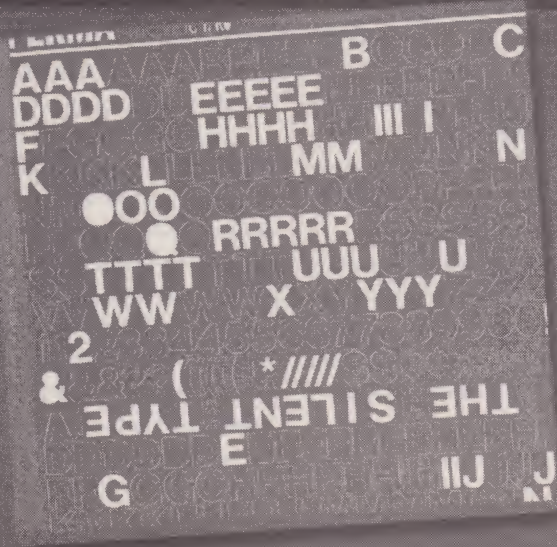
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The Construction of Humanism in Radio

by Rick Moody

I.

Forgive me if I employ a literary analogy, in order to talk at greater length about radio. Literature is what I know best, and I think there's some overlap between what's happening there, in literary fiction, and what's happening in radio these days. So I'll start with books.

What's happening in literary fiction, the way I see it, is the hegemony of the formulaic. I'm not going to name names—it doesn't do any good—but even a casual familiarity with the fiction in the *New Yorker* over the course of a few months, or a glance at the work of some of the writers who have come out of the eminent Iowa Writer's Workshop in the last 10 years will indicate the presence of a rather profound homogenizing force in fiction. While the writers in question know very well how to construct a perfectly calibrated story, the fact that their work often sounds the same would lead one naturally to wonder if there isn't, by reason of homogeny, something missing from the literature of the times.

And what's missing? Without getting too technical, the problem arguably lies with an overreliance on the trope of the epiphany. Epiphany is about revelation, understanding. The light of recognition.

So far, so good.

James Joyce was likely the first writer to turn this trope of the epiphany into a kind of a reliable literary device. In *Dubliners*, his early short story collection, Joyce, whether by design or education made the

epiphany the *ne plus ultra* of narrative. By the end of the 20th century, it's possible to find the epiphanic structure almost anywhere you look for it, at least in contemporary American fiction.

Herein lies the problem. The epiphany, as literary gesture, has become predictable. You can even *hear* when the epiphany comes to pass at readings by literary writers. A sort of *moo*, a softly murmured lowing of assent, sweeps through the audience. The *moo*, you see, indicates that esteem for our fellow humans has been approved.

Humanist approval is well and good, but is it a genuine response, one freely entered into, if it's utterly predictable? If it's the one and only goal of a story or novel? The answer to this lies over in a related field of endeavor, namely genre fiction. Genre fiction, at least for the purpose of my remarks, is fiction that rigidly adheres to a certain formula, in order to deliver quantifiable and entirely stylized kinds of pleasures. Romance, science fiction, mystery, Western. These are some of the time-honored varieties of genre fiction. With genre fiction, there is never any doubt that the predictable form will lead to the predictable

result. That's why people read this work. It doesn't bother these readers that genre fiction is entirely calculating, and that the result, the faint and halfhearted orgasmic simulation that comes from knowing who killed the dead guy, or that comes from knowing that the girl will indeed marry the prince, is arrived at passively. These readers of genre fiction are at the mercy of a code, because where there is no freedom for the reader, no moving around in the work, no interpreting it, then there is no real joy, and when the book is finished, it is tossed on a stack of other genre fictions, and the name of the author is quickly forgotten.

If literary fiction too has come to refer to one thing, a kind of a story that delivers a predictable humanist epiphany in a likeable, uncontroversial character, at a predictable point in the story, then, philosophically speaking, it is no different from genre fiction. Oddly, the reaction in literary circles to this turn of events—the refining of story structure into something like a formula—has been muted. You would expect a little discontent by reason of frustration. But most of the discontent has been from the die-hard realists themselves. Any vestigial modernism, these days, occasions an onslaught of Bush-era anti-intellectual witch hunting that intends to wipe out anything that remains of the old disorderly speculative impulse, as in, e.g., a recent review of Jonathan Safran Foer's work that appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly*:

"Pomo readers work with their writers only in the sense that volunteers from an audience work with the stage hypnotist: emptying their minds from the start, smiling through one humiliation after another, and even working up a tear or two should this abruptly be demanded of them. The hoariest plot, the tritest message—these be-

come acceptably highbrow as long as everything is tossed out in shreds that the reader, mentally falling on hands and knees, must piece together. Older fans of prizewinning fiction have been at the game for so long that their discernment has atrophied. Perhaps the younger ones never had much to begin with. Either way, the guilelessness that once had to be willed is now reflexive."

The situation with contemporary literature, therefore, the situation that I would have you keep in the back of your mind, is this: literary fiction becomes more and more formulaic, more resistant to heterogeneity, in pursuit of a quantifiable "humanist effect," and the critical community becomes ever more vocal and ever more hysterical about kinds of work that deviate from a normative idea about what literature is and must be.

2.

Now let me see if I can't make a rough analogy with what's happening in contemporary radio.

Radio, these days, does, more or less, three things. It features music programming, talk radio, and a kind of documentary/news format that we generally associate with National Public Radio and its affiliates. Music seems like a natural use for radio, an unassailable use for radio, since music encourages the act of listening, and what else is radio for but listening? (You won't be surprised to hear that the kind of music I like to listen to on the radio is free-form, independent, or college radio, where there are no rigid playlists to speak of.) Talk radio, meanwhile, seems like an unavoidable use for radio, a natural and reductive but wholly explicable use for the medium. Though I don't listen to much talk radio, I do feel like Howard Stern (likewise his legion of imitators) does, actually, use

the medium in a compelling and savvy way. Howard Stern is all about the transmitter and the wattage and the cars stuck in rush-hour traffic. And the fact that much of the program is improvised gives it a very American flavor. If a largely improvised radio program devoted to commuters mostly concerns breasts, pornography, celebrity, sex, flatulence, and like topics, is this surprising? Not to me it isn't. It's pitched at the basest demographic: men in their 20s and 30s. No one ever went broke betting low on the tastes of the audience in question. This Stern variety of talk radio makes a bewildering and complicated world, a world in which traditional masculinity is manifestly less infallible than it was a generation or two ago, seem smaller and more explicable. Yes, tits and ass will make your life better. Yes, your life will improve if you accept the Christ or kick some Iraqi butt. I may revile the political message of much talk radio, but I am not surprised by it.

However, I mean to concern myself mainly with the third variety of radio, the documentary news part. Let's leave aside that portion of public radio programming that is merely variations on music and talk radio, i.e., *Car Talk*, or *Fresh Air*, or even *A Prairie Home Companion*, the last of which does something radio really ought to be doing (variety) and manages to dress it up in enough nostalgia that it suddenly becomes palatable to a nation suspicious of all things new. These shows I've just mentioned are genuinely interesting. *Car Talk* especially is very interesting, although the only parts I like unstintingly are the parts that do not have to do with cars.

You hear a lot of documentary radio on NPR. It's big in the second half hour of *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered*. It's

often a strategy on *Marketplace*. It's popular on the weekend programs. It makes up a lot of the less well-known public radio programs, such as *Living on Earth*, *Studio 360*, *On the Media*. It's perhaps even more ubiquitous on adventurous programs like *Soundprint* or *Radio Lab*.

What do I mean when I talk about documentary radio? I mean bits of programming composed of investigative pieces, where producers go out into the field, record in exotic locales (anywhere that is not a studio), meet people, and combine narrative reportage with field recordings and the voices of others. The documentary impulse means not only to describe events, but also to represent particular milieus, a windswept tundra you've never visited, or a housing project that you, middle American audience member, might shy away from venturing into.

The original concept of documentary radio is unassailable, just as the idea of mapping the globe was once unassailable, or the project of rural electrification. But like many unassailable ideas, the ascendance of the documentary, in the era of public radio, carries with it a hidden cost, and for me the hidden cost is unignorable. The cost I'm describing finds its first expression in the fact that a lot of this documentary work sounds exactly like every other radio doc you've ever heard. Probably some people would have arrived at this conclusion a lot sooner than I have. Theorists of the history of broadcast, for example. I am, however, slow to dissatisfaction, and especially with a resource like public radio, programming that is so much what I do want to hear on the radio, programming that is largely politically astute, smart, and which does try to give voice to the voiceless.

And yet at a certain point in the last few years I began to feel like the way the music worked (and still works) on *All Things Considered* was beginning to drive me crazy. I started to feel like the music served as a little ornamental tic in a lot of the stories. Oh, here come the *exotic sitars* to indicate that the story is from another part of the world. And if the regional condescension of the music (i.e., even though Bollywood films are more popular and more profitable than Hollywood films, Bollywood music is still "other" to that middle-American NPR audience) is not enough, a piece of music is often boiled down to 10 second or 20 seconds on a news program, whereupon it is no longer a representation of the piece from which it comes. Often a piece of music is chosen simply because it has a timely rest or a silence that will be useful for purposes of editing. Moreover, this little crumb of music is often being asked to do emotional work, to provide emotional freight, after some documentary piece, and it is thus contextually wrenched out of its setting too.

Even in shows I admire, like *This American Life*, I have come to feel that the music is used in a way that was somewhat in bad faith. Even here, music that has quite different ambitions (One Ring Zero, say, or the Tin Hat Trio, or the perennially public radio-abused Penguin Café Orchestra), is being made to ratify the wry, antic humor of some of the program's pieces. In some cases, without giving credit to the composers at all.

Soon after I began to feel that the music excerption in public radio programming was suspect, I started to feel like the sound effects, too, were heinously predictable. These field recordings occurred in spots just where they were always to be expected, and they were always *what* was expected. If it were a story about hurricanes, you would hear the wind howling by a shoreline, if the story were about construction, you would hear construction vehicles, some of them perhaps backing up and beeping in that backing up kind of way. If the setting was a housing project, you would hear the kids in the playground underneath the narrator at the opening of the piece (In

fact, while writing this essay, I heard a documentary on *Morning Edition*, wherein the ubiquitous children playing were heard in the background of a story about Afghani warlords. While I can't prove it was the same tape used in the background for the housing projects piece [it was hard to tell what language the urchins were using], it goes to show how interchangeable the field recordings really are.).

Finally, even the talking heads on these documentary pieces ultimately came to seem to me just as hackneyed as the field recordings and the music. Foreordained, predictable, these sound bites remarked in just the way the reporter or producer expects them to remark. And that's without even mentioning the reporters themselves. Even the locutions of these voices is similar, with cadences that rise and fall in familiar ways, tailing up at the ends of sentences. The NPR voice is not unlike the "poetry voice" that has come to dominate all readings by American poets under forty. With the result that the reporters of public radio now largely resemble one another, such that if you do not know the number of an NPR affiliate in a strange town, all you need to do is flip around, on the left of the dial, until you hear that tone of voice.

While I admire what public radio is and has been trying to do for 25 years or more, I find that I have also come to disbelieve it somehow, for the simple reason that I cannot believe that all of human life and psychology, all of human events, all of human history (not to mention the lives and environment of our animal friends), can always be rendered in *exactly the same way*. Suddenly, a medium that I love, that is, because I love thinking with my ears, begins to seem deeply suspect to me.

What, then, is documentary radio trying to do? In a way, it's trying to do exactly what contemporary fiction trying to do: It is trying to provoke in, the listener, you, the fabled epiphany. It is trying to create in you the impulse of humanism.

Humanism a worthy goal for the literature and arts of the period. Of course. The question, however, is if the goal of humanism, the assertion

thereof, can survive the problem of its representation in the medium of audio. As with contemporary literature, contemporary radio has apparently found that it has to *construct* a certain rigid notion of humanism, in order to effect this humanist epiphany in you and me. And yet as soon as the construction becomes predictable, homogenized, devoid of surprise, I for one no longer hear the humanism at all. In fact, it starts to sound manipulative, controlling, condescending, perhaps even a little sinister. It's like a piece of music that has been so compressed in the studio that the dynamic variation has been entirely squeezed out of it.

3. Syntax

I dream of a new age of curiosity. We have the technical means for it; the desire is there; the things to be known are infinite; the people who can employ themselves at this task exist. Why do we suffer? From too little: from channels that are too narrow, skimpy, quasi-monopolistic, insufficient. There is no point in adopting a protectionist attitude, to prevent "bad" information from invading and suffocating the "good." Rather, we must multiply the paths and the possibility of comings and goings.

—Michel Foucault, "The Masked Philosopher"

What is to be done?

One rejoinder to my earlier remarks would of course be to say that the documentary form in contemporary radio adheres to a certain *syntax*. That is, a certain deployment of field recording and spot music and talking heads is the very syntax that documentary requires to do its job. Literature requires nouns and verbs and modifiers to do its job, radio requires talking heads and field recordings. This may be true, up to a point. However, when you listen to earlier periods of radio, you find a much greater tolerance for discontinuous elements, for longer quotations from the speaking subjects in the pieces, a triumph of languor over brevity, a willingness to let field recordings *be* field recordings. Genuine sound effects, wonder, fiction, all of these things had their essential roles in radio, in contrast to what we find now.

While I admire what public radio is and has been trying to do for 25 years or more, I find that I have also come to disbelieve it somehow, for the simple reason that I cannot believe that all of human life and psychology, all of human events, all of human history (not to mention the lives and environment of our animal friends), can always be rendered in *exactly the same way*.

Which is to say that if, arguably, there are syntactical elements to a documentary approach, then these syntactical elements are not fixed in nature, but rather fluctuate according to the fashion of a moment. This is especially true, it seems to me, in the blind adherence to brevity. When I was at the Third Coast Audio Festival last year, I heard more than one producer say that one of the great dangers of radio is that someone might *turn the dial*. Every documentary program needs to be alert to this possibility that an ADD-afflicted listener might, in the end, give this dial a spin. In this way do we give away the whole notion of pacing to the most impatient among us. The remarks of speakers in various documentary pieces are made ever shorter, until there is no complexity of character constructed in the piece, and no room for any idea that takes longer than a few seconds to argue. Of course, you do this long enough and the listener will no longer know that there is another way of rendering the human voice in the act of speaking.

A second rejoinder might be to point out that print journalism, too, has its clichés (the *New York Times*, for example, just ran its annual or biennial summer photograph of children frolicking in the spume of an open hydrant). It has its hackneyed stylings, as does television news (the bastard child of the documentary arts), as does documentary cinema. Why pick on radio? The answer to this question is simply that I pick on radio because I *care*. And it is no rationale to say that because other media want for imagination and creativity that radio should somehow be exempted or be held to the same low standard that we might use to judge the

nightly news on network television.

Having attempted to dispense with some of the criticisms, therefore, I would like to move onto some suggestions.

My first idea about how to improve radio programming is therefore to stop worrying so much about people turning the dial. If you are intending to represent humanism, if you are trying to depict people as they talk and think, these abbreviations are doing a disservice to your intention, because human life is not lived in minute-and-a-half segments. In human life, changes can arise dramatically, but they can also take place imperceptibly, over years.

Another prejudice at the Third Coast Festival had to do with fidelity to the truth. The documentarians had, in my experience, an almost cult-like belief that there is such a thing as objective truth in documentary radio, that a tape recording can be identical with an event or narrative or *out there* in the world, when in fact a recording, objectively speaking, is just some ones and zeroes on a memory chip. It can't be otherwise. And since perfect fidelity is impossible in this medium, since an apple is an apple and an orange is an orange, why is not subjectivity just as good? At least on occasion? This was part of the idea, it seems to me, in the early incarnations of *This American Life*. That a powerful personality, and a strong idea about the tragicomedy of the world can be just as "true" as the hard news.

Furthermore, if perfect fidelity is impossible, then why can't a mix of a straight-ahead documentary approach and *art* be a part of public radio. The public radioworld certainly tolerates documentary

work *about* art and artists and writers (these profiles being among the more formulaic spots in public radio programming), but it certainly isn't very good at collaborating with art. For example, one of the best programs out of WNYC in New York, *The Next Big Thing*, perennial winner of awards, and a show that younger producers have looked to with reverence and awe, had its wings clipped this year by its parent station, ostensibly for budgetary reasons. *The Next Big Thing* (for which I contributed a number of pieces) had a big, voracious appetite for the non-linear, the unusual, the artful. It embraced recordings of people skating in Wollman Rink without voice over at all, or long memoirs about Allen Ginsberg that seemed non-critical of his unusual romantic life, it embraced Jonathan Ames playing cards with his great aunt, etc. This seemed to me just the direction to go in.

Avoid brevity, celebrate fiction. These are two of my morsels of advice, and my third bit of advice is deliberately reverse foreground and background. The way a news story always sits on some mulch of background information. Why does it have to be like this? There's not an objective reason, beyond syntactical fashion, when oftentimes the background is the information that people need to hear. It's the mediation of the reporter's voice that is often the big lie. Accordingly, the humans in the piece can't be human, can't prompt the humanist epiphany, unless they're allowed to appear without editorial intercession.

A fourth suggestion, along similar lines, would be to make the music central to the work, perhaps even "diegetic," to use the cinematic term. Let the music endanger or preclude the narration. Because

My suggestion is to think against the content-oriented language that is used for most documentary radio, and to try to think a little bit about how a more encyclopedic, kaleidoscopic language mirrors the more encyclopedic and kaleidoscopic world. A language of celebration and mutability is more about the human spirit than an ostensibly objective news language that is not, in fact, objective at all.

the narration, ideally, is really just a kind of music, seen in the correct light, and its privileged position is, as I've said, arbitrary. If the privileged position of content-oriented language is disturbed, new kinds of ideas are generated, and new possibilities for meaning.

Which leads me to venture a suggestion about language itself. Language, words, the music of language are what documentary news is made of (in part), the same language that makes poetry or excellent prose, or drama, etc. Why so dull and flat? And here we are obliged to recall the original section of this manifesto, the section about literature. It's hard not to conclude that just as there is a resistance to musical prose in contemporary writing there is a resistance in radio to an artful or even marginally creative use of language, as well. In addition to the humanist epiphany, which radio tries to summon in just the way the apocryphal monkey taps on the button in the corner in cage in order that he might procure his opiates, radio and literature both, in their mainstream evocations, rely on a diminished idea of language.

My suggestion is to think *against* the content-oriented language that is used for most documentary radio, and to try to think a little bit about how a more encyclopedic, kaleidoscopic language mirrors the more encyclopedic and kaleidoscopic world. A language of celebration and mutability is more about the human spirit than an ostensibly objective news language

that is not, in fact, objective at all. And, of course, the narrower the vocabulary, the narrower the horizons ahead of us in the landscape, for all of us. The fewer words we use, the simpler sentences, the more difficult it becomes later to call up the complex means to render a more complicated world.

So, as regards documentaries: avoid brevity, celebrate fiction, abbreviate the role of the narrator, play with foreground and background, make music central, utilize the spirit of the arts, make the language sing. *Play in general*. At one time, radio was noted for drama and serial narrative. At one time, people gathered around the radio to hear the weekly updates of serial fiction programs. It's unlikely this will ever happen in the same way again, but does that mean that radio must abdicate its former glory entirely?

4. Collage

There are many glimmers of hope, I think.

There is, on the one hand, the hegemony of the formulaic in public radio. There is the wiping out of shows that feature alternatives, like *The Next Big Thing*. Obviously, I find these developments dispiriting. But there are glimmers of hope.

The revolution has to come from out of the mainstream. The mainstream is controlled by money, power, and politics, and as such is suspect. The industry leader has no reason to change, no matter what the field, unless there is genuine pressure

from another direction.

And maybe there is pressure. I'm thinking not only of the Web, where sites like Ubuweb.com and Transom.org serve as repository for new sounds and new ways of thinking about audio. And there is Internet radio in general. And there is satellite radio, and podcasting.

Certain commercial radio formats are already said to be catering to the temperament of the iPod habitué. How would a public radio programmer think like an iPod user? Well, first, this programmer, this documentarian, might be thinking more creatively about collage and about non-linearity. The iPod arrives at a moment when sampling, in Hip Hop and electronica, have become regular parts of culture.

These are hopeful developments, developments that put radio back in the hands of the user, that empower the listener with respect to the medium of radio, instead of leaving this listener passive at the apprehension of an increasingly successful, but increasingly detached public radio, one that is, in fact, estranged from the lives of its listeners. The collage-oriented nature of *The Next Big Thing*, *Radio Lab*, *Soundprint*, suggests what's going to happen next, but if radio outlets on the web can make themselves felt to a larger public, the results in the future are even more potentially interesting. For documentary makers on the ground the possibilities ahead may well be far more exciting than they are now. ©

A version of this essay originally appeared on Transom.org.

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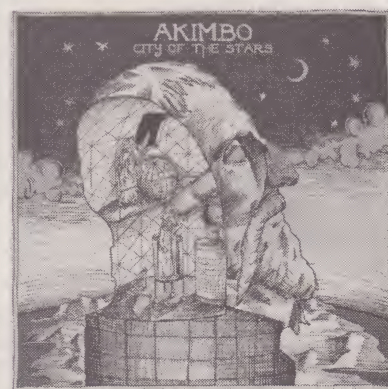
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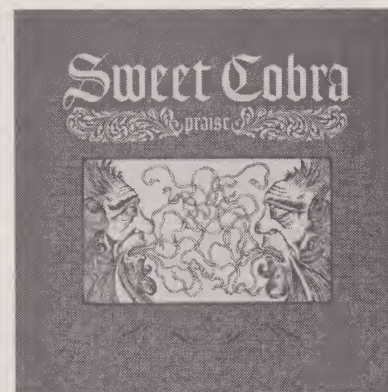
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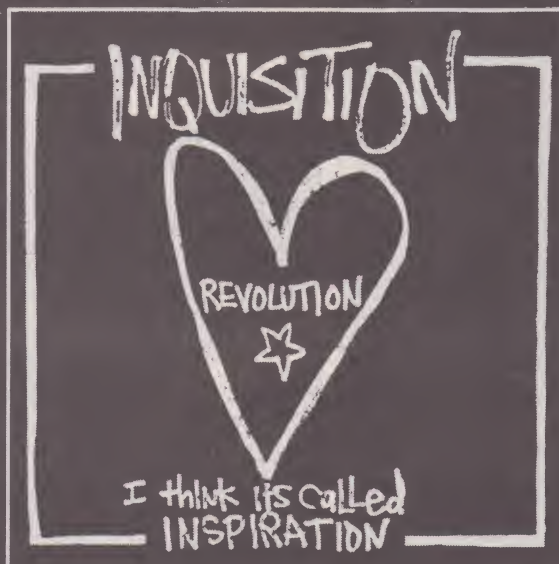


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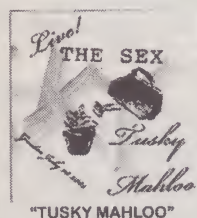


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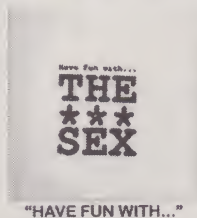
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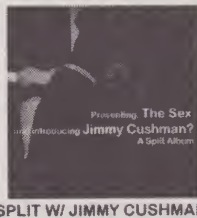
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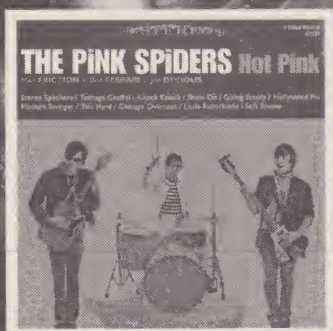


fig.1 THE PINK SPIDERS

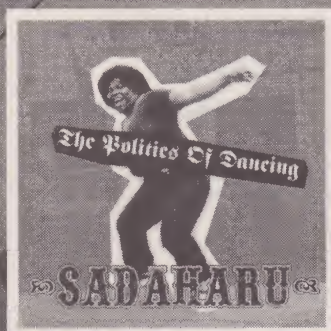


fig.2 SADA HARU



fig.3 FIRE DEUCE

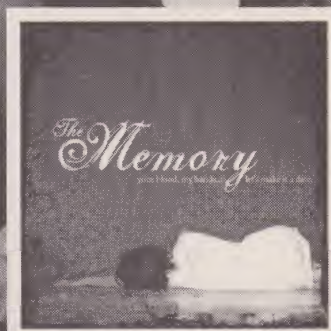


fig.4 THE MEMORY

Detail on fig. 1 - HOT PINK "An all out assault on all the tender parts of our favor, the parts of us that like our rock 'n' roll to lie with us in big, hooky, synergetic, lump. It courts the very threads in us that need the excitement of something that sounds daring." -**PUNK PLANET**

Detail on fig. 2 - THE POLITICS OF DANCING "One of the 100 Bands You Need to Know in 2005" -**ALTERNATIVE PRESS** // "Dancable politically charged post punk... Remarkably high-energy, hip-shaking gems" -**CMJ** // "If I told you that I was going to start a band, and in that band I'd mix punk, hardcore, and jazz, you'd probably call me crazy, right? Well not only would I not be crazy, but I wouldn't be original either because SADA HARU has been doing it for a while now... REFUSED meets FUGAZI meets DRIVE LIKE JEHU. Seriously, its that good" -**AMP**

Detail on fig. 3 - CHILDREN OF THE DEUCE The side-project of Travis Steever from COHEED AND CAMBRIA and members of THREE.

Detail on fig. 4 - YOUR BLOOD, MY HANDS... LET'S MAKE IT A DATE THE MEMORY deftly combine the song-writing prowess of TAKING BACK SUNDAY with the polished edginess of FINCH and the attitude of THE USED.

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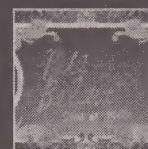
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columns

PP70

larry livermore

al burian

jessica hopper

nomy lamm

janelle



WAKE ME UP WHEN SEPTEMBER ENDS

*"I have often noticed
that Americans, whose
language when talk-
ing business is clear and
dry, easily turn bom-*

*bastic when they attempt a poetic style. Writers almost always pander to this propen-
sity. They inflate their imaginations and swell them out beyond bounds, so that they
achieve gigantism, missing real grandeur." —Alexis de Tocqueville, "Why American
Writers and Speakers Are Often Bombastic"*

The day dawned bright and sunny, but tattered bits of cloud were already poking their sullen noses over the horizon, and by mid-morning, they had joined forces and overtaken much of the sky. By the time I set out for the stadium, there was no sky, only a bleak gray shroud that hung low over the city and threatened to swallow it whole.

I slipped into my seat just before kickoff at 3 pm. "Another summer come and gone, eh?" said Don, my seatmate for the past eight seasons. He's seen more than a few summers come and go; this will be his 58th year supporting Fulham Football Club. Bob, our other seatmate, is missing. At 80, he's finally admitted that the 50-mile journey down from Hertfordshire had become too much for him.

"It's not the journey really, is it?" says Don, and I nod in agreement. We both know that Bob gets too wound up when

Fulham loses, which happens a lot. Sometimes he barely speaks to his wife for a day or two afterward, just sits there sulking about a stupid goalkeeping mistake or a referee's blatant bias.

The first day of a new season is supposed to be all about hope, clean slates, unlimited possibilities, but we Fulham supporters don't get carried away. We're not Chelsea or Man United or Arsenal, one of whom will almost inevitably win the championship. If we manage to stay in the Premier League and play against the big boys for another year, that's victory enough for us.

The stadium floodlights are on, even though it's the middle of the afternoon, and as Fulham and Birmingham struggle to a dispirited 0-0 draw, the rain comes bucketing down. Don leans over to me and says, "Now we've got some proper football weather."

I know what he means. With football season getting underway in August, our first games are sometimes played in blazing hot sunshine, which feels a bit unnatural. Football is meant to be played in the biting winds and horizontal downpours of midwinter, not that the English climate isn't capable of serving up that sort of weather any time of year.

But today definitely has an autumnal feel about it, as the BBC forecasters are fond of saying, and it's not just the weather, either. We've had our requisite two weeks of summer back in July; though there may still be some warm, sunny days to come, they'll be a bonus. There's no denying that the tide has turned, that the year is on the wane.

Sometimes I catch myself wishing we could go straight from August to October. I know that doesn't make sense; September is

an excellent month, combining the last languid days of summer with the edgy excitement of new beginnings and adventures that autumn brings.

But for me it can be too bittersweet, too full of regrets for chances missed and pleasures squandered, too replete with foreboding and gloom about winter and another year's end fast approaching. October I can handle. By then it's no longer possible to delude ourselves: summer is well and truly gone, and we might as well enjoy the beauty of its passing.

September, though, can play tricks on the mind. There will be days when it's hot enough to go to the beach, to top up our tans, to believe that maybe just this once summer doesn't have to end. Which makes it all the crueler when a cold wind sweeps in overnight and you wake up knowing that yesterday's day in the sun will have been the last for the year.

Underlying that melancholy feeling is a deeper sadness, one we don't often articulate but is there nonetheless: the reminder that there will come a time when our last day of summer is not just the last for this year, but the last forever.

OK, that might sound a bit morbid, but he not busy being born is busy dying and all that. Anyway, I was thinking of another September, in 1987, to be precise, when I first saw a band called Operation Ivy. It was my first night back at Gilman after being away in Europe all summer, and this kid I knew came running up to me saying, "Larry, I'm in a new band!"

His name was Tim, but I always called him "that floppy boy" because of the way he'd jump and flop around, kind of like a hy-

peractive rag doll. Minutes later he was up on stage, and the crowd was going crazy. By the time Op Ivy had played their second song, this notion that had been kicking around the back of my head for a while had crystallized: I was going to start a record label.

What was happening at Gilman in 1987 was one of those moments you get so caught up in while it's happening that you barely have time to think about it, but will be with you for the rest of your life. There was something here that the rest of the world needed to know about, and within a couple months my friend David Hayes and I had launched Lookout Records.

We didn't set out just to document the East Bay/Gilman sound, but that's what happened, at least for the first few years. Then David left, and East Bay-influenced bands had sprung up all over the country, so Lookout began representing a sound rather than a specific scene.

I never expected Lookout to be more than an expensive hobby, so when it turned into a multi-million dollar company, I was, to put it mildly, less than fully prepared. I was good at discovering and signing new bands, good at coaxing maximum performances out of them on minimal budgets, good at hyping the East Bay sound and spirit, but not so good at being the president and chief executive officer of a large and rapidly growing business.

So I freaked out, and after less than 10 years, walked away from it all. It was widely reported that I had "sold" Lookout, but that wasn't true; the only money I got was what I had earned up until that date. I left behind a company and catalog worth millions, figuring it would thrive with or without me.

As things happened, it didn't. I started hearing rumors that bands weren't being paid, which alarmed me; one of the reasons Lookout had been so successful as a business was that we always paid our bills on time. We had to—nobody was going to give us credit—and that imposed a financial discipline that stopped us from doing the crazy things that get so many other indie labels into trouble.

Unfortunately bands are always the first to get it in the back of the neck when a label's in trouble, because they don't usually have access to lawyers and collection agencies. That made me all the more determined to make sure our bands were paid fairly and on time. Not only was it the right thing to do—obviously—but it was good business, too. Most of our bands loved being on Lookout, and demonstrated it with their loyalty and trust.

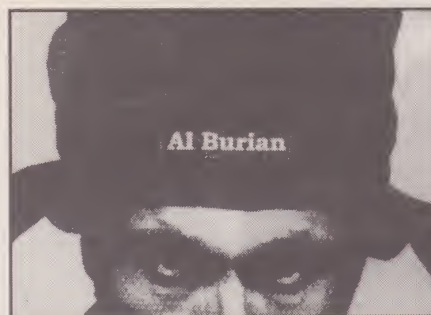
When things began going wrong, and bands started deserting Lookout, bands that I had signed and worked closely with, I felt terrible. I didn't have any control over the situation, there was nothing I could do other than encourage Lookout to get it together. But I did start to wonder if I had been wrong to leave the company the way I did.

This month the worst news yet came: Green Day, the biggest of the Lookout bands, had pulled their back catalog for non-payment of royalties. The money that could have been used to pay them off went instead to Ben Weasel and his partner John Jughead to avert a threatened lawsuit, and Lookout had had to lay off all its remaining employees. It was back to being run by its three co-owners, a mere shell of what it had been a few years earlier. If they act carefully and wisely, the label might still survive, but it's by no means certain.

There's a Chinese proverb that goes, "As soon as you give a name to something, it begins to die." I first read that when I was about 20, and couldn't make heads or tails out of it, but eventually I realized it applied to anything from a newborn baby to a social or cultural movement to a business enterprise. When I stood there watching Operation Ivy and thought, "I want to make a record with these guys," I'd unknowingly set in motion the process that would help destroy much of what I loved most about Gilman and the East Bay.

There will be other scenes, other music, other record labels, though it's unlikely I'll be involved with them in the same way. New people will get excited over new dreams, be inspired enough to turn those dreams into reality, and somewhere down the line, watch those dreams fade and die. It's life and life only, nothing to get all shattered about.

Sometimes when September comes, it's easy, too easy, to look back on the glories of summer and youth and caring so much about something or someone that it seemed like nothing else mattered at all. But September's not a time for dwelling on passions like that, more a time for quiet contemplation and appreciation of what remains when all the leaves have fallen and all the music has gone quiet: nothing but the lives we have lived and the beauty and truth with which we have lived them.



SUMMER 2005 ROUND-UP

Tim Murphy, Chicago's number one seasonal muse on account of his recent "Summer 2005" tattoo, has run into a car

while riding his bicycle. He has escaped with a broken collarbone. That injury strikes me as unpleasant, particularly so as I have just watched my roommate spend a year in physical therapy recovering from a similar injury, incurred in a hit-and-run accident while bike messaging; and then there is Tim's tattoo, which I can remember all too well his showing me on the lawn outside of some house show right at the start of summer, not in a bragging or show-offish way, but in illustrative response to my comment, that it seemed like the season was headed in the right direction, that things were "getting pretty good."

House shows have been getting pretty good in Chicago. Desperation breeds innovation, and the closing of the Fireside Bowl as an all-ages venue in town has probably contributed to the upsurge. But even before the final curtain (which was, from all accounts, pretty anti-climactic—though Fireside booker Brian Peterson always promised that there would be no official final show, instead predicting that one day the kids would show up to find bulldozers sifting through a pile of rubble. Wishful thinking, Brian, but it does make a nice mental image), there were those who thought of even the good ole Fireside as mainstream and elitist. And though one might dismiss these gripes as punk ethical purism bordering on the level of self-parody, long-time readers of the Fireside schedule will note an eerie correlation between matinee shows of a few summers ago and the line-up for Ozzfest second stage this summer. To get full egalitarianism you have to cut out the lure of material gain; thus the house show, with its capacity crowds of 30, promise of 10 to 15 dollars gas money, and potential for cracked-out house dwellers asking if they can jam on your equipment after the show, effectively cutting out the careerists, leaving only the purity of the musical catharsis, or at least hopefully a decent party.

My party plan for the summer has involved trying to eschew attendance at the legit music venues, and find my way to the house shows instead. There is nothing quite like walking in on a full-volume rock band in someone's kitchen, rattling plates off of their shelves, as far as experiences of jarring spatial transgression, what hippies call a *temporary autonomous zone*: a familiar surrounding, suddenly used in an unorthodox way. Musically, the fare offered at house shows varies in about the same ratios as any music venue of any size, from the most profound and transcendental to the worst hack jobs imaginable. But also you might get the bonus experience of a long bike ride, getting lost in an unfamiliar part of town, some new glimpse into the vast vista of panoramic secrets within the decaying ribcage of the unspeakably giant carcass of Chicago, IL. The chase, in this case, while

not necessarily better, is often at least rival to the catch. Chicago invites biking, encourages it, makes it available in unbelievable doses; this is in sharp contrast to, say, Carrboro, North Carolina, where you can only bike for about 15 minutes before you run out of town. In Chicago there are no hills in sight and you can get to as far as Indiana without leaving the city limits. Searching out these illicit venues is a great way to explore. There are vast tracts of flatness extending in all directions, crammed with buildings; there is endless possible space, and thus no end to the possibilities.

And, of course, drinking and biking is fun as hell, too. Those long, super-straight stretches can be navigated half-asleep, no-handed, with no higher brain function needed than basic grasp of numerical sequence and rudimentary recognition of the names of US presidents. Space out, relax: my friend Lisa describes the pleasant sensation of "being caught up in some train of thought and suddenly realizing I haven't been aware that I was on a bicycle for several minutes." The fun numb haze of drunkenness compliments the winded feeling in the lungs, the pleasant ache of pedaling. A blast of euphoric, furniture-rattling noise at the destination point provides a fitting sonic accompaniment. But of course, there is a downside to all this leisure: "I tend to just kind of blow through lights when I'm in that state," Lisa admits. Her admission is unnerving to me, because I recognize in my biking this same state of zoned out auto-pilot, even when I'm sober. The ease with which I fall into motion-induced hypnosis has led me to avoid operating motor vehicles unless absolutely necessary; on a bicycle, I reason, there are limitations to how much damage I can do to myself. But can I rely on the motor vehicle operators of the greater Chicagoland area to be diligent and alert to my presence? Jimmy Fountain once gave me his breakdown of biking in New York City: "Definitely the fastest way to get around, you just have to accept that your bike will get stolen once every six months and you'll get hit by a car once every four months." The probabilities cannot be much rosier here.

The number of near-death experiences that I have on a daily basis because I'm thinking about important topics like what to write that *Punk Planet* column about and so space a stop sign is already at unacceptable levels without substance abuse—and, since the substances are abused to get my mind off of my problems, arguably the drinking even helps, in that it gets my mind off of the column deadlines. The real enemy, clearly, are the cell-phones: eight times out of 10 my near-death experiences with cars involve the driver of the car talking on one. What's the point of staying sober under those conditions? Better my mind should be at ease, and my limbs relaxed, before impact.

Fatalism seems to be the reigning philosophy of Chicago, IL: from the moment I first set foot in the Fireside, I was told it was doomed, that the bulldozers were around the corner, that it couldn't last and I should enjoy it while I could. House shows are great because they are 100 percent doomed ventures, guaranteed to be shut down by cops, neighbors, the landlord—maybe not this

time, but probably next time. Enjoy it while you can. Noah Leger summed this mode of geographical relation up for me in his statement *it's OK to smoke because I live on Western Avenue*. This is a hard argument to refute, actually, if one ever spends even five minutes breathing on Western, and it is not a logic flaw which vexes me about the statement, it's the underlying given: the city is going to kill you eventually, so why deny yourself anything now?

SUMMER 2005: "I've thought about all the possible ramifications of meaning," Tim had assured me, when I questioned him about the apparent enthusiasm implicit in his tattoo, "and most of them are bad." So here's one from the 'bad' category: the cities' bacchanalian saint is laid out on the pavement, courtesy the forces of darkness, the anti-party, here in the vehicular homicide capital of the USA. Good luck, Tim, on what will hopefully be a speedy recovery and better luck next season.

...

Meanwhile, the reviews have been pouring in, and they're not looking too good either. "This guy went from biting humor to simply biting," reads one response to a recent fanzine I've made. "At least sign to a corporate press, that way people who are trying to do something positive with their work can write you off as a sell-out." Even *Punk Planet*—this very magazine—won't give me a good review! "Self-indulgent blathering . . . Burian seems to need anti-depressants lately," the reviewer scoffs. Anti-depressants? What I need, people, is a healthy dose of nepotism. Looking over the list of reviewers, I notice several people who should have been able to take care of this. Vincent Chung, when are you to give me some much-needed nep? Brian Moss, you're always nice to my face, can't you do something for me behind the scenes? Good lord, Joe Biel PUBLISHED a book for me, and then sat meekly by as it got scathed in *Punk Planet* as well! I find this lack of favoritism highly disturbing.

Moreover, the whole premise of the "depressing" accusation really irks me. What's up, readers, are the pastel colors and tasteful fonts softening your brains? If this is the case, then my column ought to be the most popular item in the magazine, since my goal as a writer is almost exclusively to provide light comedy, a little soft-boiled ha-ha to counteract the mostly grim news from everywhere else. So either a) I'm communicating the *opposite* of what I'm trying to communicate—not a very good review of my writing abilities, b) you people just don't get my jokes, or c) what we have here is a failure to communicate, a lack of correlating givens. It wouldn't be the first time. The aesthetic of punk—loud, obnoxious, confrontational, *real*—has never come naturally to me, but I've learned it, and I've been happy to parade it around at times, like an ill-fitting superhero outfit. The punk outlook seems to me a good way to confront the daily tragedy head-on, without buckling under the weight of it, a good way to laugh and thereby keep from crying. Of course, either reaction is perfectly appropriate. It's the non-reaction which bothers me, and your demands that I not broach the subject, that I not display a reaction either. What's going on here? Perhaps it's you who ought to be taking a few less anti-depressants?



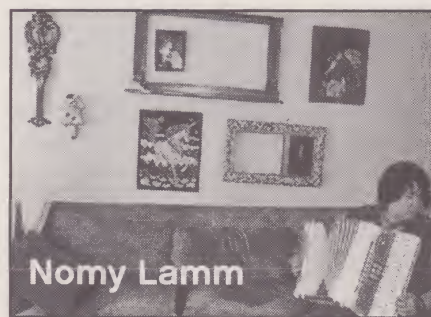
It was late '79, we had just wrapped *Zorro The Gay Blade*, and George Peppard and I had taken off to Cozumel for a few weeks. He had a place down

there, a parrot farm that he invested in. Shit was barely coming together for me, I knew the films were crap but I had to take 'em—it'd been six years since the divorce, Alanna hadn't married Rod Stewart yet, and even though she was getting primo walk-ons on *Love Boat*, I was still supporting her "in the manner to which she was accustomed"—she'd caught me in bed with Jan-Michael Vincent, and since then, it'd all been more like a ritual bloodletting rather than anything resembling alimony. I made the fucking idiotic mistake of marrying her in South Carolina, rather than California, which is no fault and so she got half. I tried to talk her into a Haitian divorce, just to get it over, but she wasn't having any of that. Finally, after a year of probate, I just said, fuck it, you take everything and just leave me out of it. The money, the house, the tanning bed, the Nudie suits, the Benz—I didn't give a shit anymore, it's all yours, I'm done. I was sleeping in a hammock in the gazebo behind this house Louis Malle was renting in Coldwater Canyon, and kept all my clothes in the trunk of my car. I spent most of the time driving up and down the I, back and forth from Jackie Susann's place up in Malibu. Her daughter's boyfriend was keeping me stocked. Chino, he was just a kid. I drove with the top down, the sun helped my hangovers. Sometimes I'd just keep driving, driving forever. It'd be dawn and I would be doing 100 on the 5, and suddenly realize I was in Modesto and turn around. I was big into *Siddhartha*, reading it over and over, it was all adding up.

Like anybody that met her, I loved her. I went over to Burt Reynolds—we were trying to get the rights to turn *Portrait of Dorian Gray* into a musical and there she was in the kitchen eating a sandwich. She acted like a virgin, had big white teeth and she laughed like she was drunk no matter what I said—so, I thought that was it, I was done. For-Ever. Then, one day, about a month after we'd gotten married, I was out in the poolhouse, drinking gin and watching *Rawhide*, and I saw Brenda Vaccarro through the fence, walking up her driveway next door, in this yellow bikini. She was older, she hadn't done a picture in years, but, you know—she still had it. She moved smooth, like a horse, real elegant and natural. And I looked out to the pool, and there was Alanna, and all of the sudden, I was struck with a terror like I had never known. *Touching the skin of only one woman for the rest of my goddamn life*. It felt like I was dying. I thought I was having a stroke. It was that bad. I took some blues and drank the rest of the gin and half the wetbar and I was still shaking like a fucking epileptic. I had no idea what to do, so I called Peppard, who was up in Reno shooting *Winds of San Andreas* with Lee Marvin. I told him I was losing my mind, and he told me to stay put, he'd send his driver out from the valley to get me and

bring me up to Reno, that all I needed was to get out of LA for a few days. Principal shooting was done for a week, we'd go to Vegas with Lee, we'd play some blackjack, see Dean. He said that all I needed was a little break. When we got off the phone, I walked out to the pool, and I got up on the diving board. Alanna was floating around on one of those inflatable things. She had her eyes shut. She—she was so still. She did not seem to be real, she was like a doll in a box. I stood there and watched her, it felt like, for a whole day. And in my head, I don't know what happened, but I jumped in, just dived in, landed right on top of her. All I was thinking was—I just wanted to sink her. I grabbed her arms and started swimming down as hard as I could. I had been a lifeguard, so I was a strong swimmer. I just thought if I could just get her down to the drain cover, to the bottom. I did not know what was going to happen after that. She was thrashing around, kicking me. We got to the bottom and I held her like an anchor, right there, at the drain cover. She was screaming my name, and even though we were underfuckingwater I could hear it, "GEORGE GEORGE GEORGE"—all her oxygen bubbling up, up to the surface. I don't know how long I had her down there, maybe a minute, maybe 30 seconds, I dunno. She kicked me in the chest and I noticed how her skin... it was so white in comparison to mine, her long hair fanning out around her. She was like a sea anemone or something. Like some creature, some wild thing in nature. I couldn't do it. I couldn't do whatever it was that I was trying to do. So, I just let go.

Write me and I will write back: po box 14624 chicago il 60614 / mcfrenchvanilla@yahoo.com. / The latest issue of *Hit it or Quit* It is avail thru insound.com. / More of the same at tiny.abstractdynamics.org / Now playing: Bill Evans, Bad Brains, FIREHOSE, Des Ark & Neneh Cherry.



I just sat down at the kitchen table with Aunt Ina and already she's criticizing my appearance. "You put all those images all over your body, you

just want attention, it's terrible, Nomy. You're trying to be conspicuous, I don't know why you do that to yourself."

How do you enter into a conversation with a 95 year-old woman with selective hearing who already knows exactly what she thinks about the world? My grandmother's older sister, the only one still alive out of four girls, Ina was the sensitive one, the introvert who played violin, traveled with the circus, studied in France, and later taught in a Michigan City school where the principal told her point-blank before hiring her that he didn't hire Jews—but he would hire her because Jews are good at music.

At 95 she lives alone in her own house in Skokie, where she still writes and compiles poetry and memoirs with amazing proliferation. Her house feels like a time capsule from a time before I was

born, except for the Yamaha keyboard and the stereo with medical tape over the buttons marked "PLAY" in large letters that she still can't make sense of. Fake fruit, an artistic rendering of Venice on the wall, large gold-framed oil paintings, classic '60s furniture.

The little old lady across from me can barely hold her head up. She sips a tuna fish smoothie, one of the only things she can still swallow, prepared by one of numerous women who come in to help her on a daily basis. She assures me that it tastes good. Her sagging cheeks and hanging head make her look like a turtle, and her hair is coiffed in a perfect Riot-Girl bob, complete with little metal barrette. This woman, I love her. She is adorable, intelligent, an inspiration to me, a woman of almost a full century who kept her heart alive through her own artistic expression. If I wasn't so opinionated myself maybe it would be easier to converse with her, though honestly I get the feeling that she enjoys being difficult. She is scanning my body with her eyes.

"I notice there's new ones since the last time I saw you, you've marked your hands now." She's talking about the cursive writing on my knuckles: "Will" on the right hand, "Love" on the left. No use trying to explain to her that these are two archetypes in Jewish mysticism, that the right side of the body is about sharing, and the left side is about receiving, and that this is part of how I organize my reality.

I try to tell her that it's not my point to be conspicuous. That I do it for me. She isn't buying it. Mostly she just keeps talking when I talk, soon I am yelling, my eyes bulging out of my head. "INA!" I shout. "I never had any choice about what happened to my body as a kid! As I grew up, I had a hard time finding anything that I could relate to in the world—I had to create it. I'm proud of my tattoos. I chose them, I went through the pain of getting them on my body. I'm not trying to be conspicuous, I'm trying to make a space for myself!"

She's shut down, staring at me blankly. "You look just like your father," she tells me, responding to my anger and not my words. "The spitting image." I'm sure she's right. I've got steam rising off me. She's asking me if I came here to argue. I tell her no, I came to visit because I care about her.

"You should listen to me. I'm older than you."

Her advice is steady, ceaseless and outdated. True she has experience in the music industry, but it was like 50 years ago. She seems certain that I am mismanaging my talents and never going to make it in the music world unless I do what she says. I tell her I have a band manager, and this seems to comfort her. I don't tell her that the manager looks as weird as me. I play her a rough recording of our music and even though she can't really hear it, she decides it's good. "This is ready!" she tells me. "People will buy it!"

She's always been good at seeing people's vulnerable points and deciding what they need. She tells me about a Chinese boy in her class, back in the '30s, who didn't have any friends, so she made him the editor of the class newspaper and suddenly he had tons of friends. "I can show you the paper if you like, it's in the other room." She tells me about the operettas she did with her students, how she cast a Japanese boy as Tom Sawyer because it was

good for his self esteem, and how the parents rallied around her and raised her salary when the school tried to cut her position.

"Students came to me with all their problems. One little boy, he came to me and said the other boys were making fun of his penis, that it was too small. Can you imagine? I had to counsel him, I said, 'Well, you'll grow.'"

I try not to laugh. She starts talking about my brother, whose name she can't remember, she is upset that he's "always been so conscious of his height—it's just terrible." I skip that one. She moves on to my dad and his new girlfriend, "She's changed him 100 percent," she says. Ina is happy that my dad has a job and is giving up on being an artist. OK. Moving on.

Ahh, here's a good subject to harp on: my parents' wedding.

"Just terrible, what a strange wedding. They lived at a commune (she pronounces it with the emphasis on the last syllable), and the wedding was held at the commune, there was no religious official, they just talked about that they were married, and that was it. Your parents were very . . . outside of the circle. Very outside of convention."

"They were idealists," I say.

"Yes. That's very childish. When you grow up, you realize that you can't change society, and you accept it. Otherwise you will never be happy."

I should be used to these kinds of negations of my rebel spirit. Still, I have to register my protest. "I will never accept that," I tell her. "I will never stop believing that it's possible to change the world." She looks irritated and disappointed and changes the subject.

To Jimmy. Her son. Her only son.

He killed himself, but this fact has always been treated as a secret, I can't really even remember how I know. "He had problems," she says. "He was too attached to me. He wanted to be a musician, but he didn't have the natural talent for it. His father wanted him to be a baseball player, but he didn't have the talent for that either, so . . . what can you do." She tells me he was brilliant at math and science, he was wanted by top universities, offered scholarships, but he didn't want to do that. It's not what he cared about.

In the back bedroom she pulls out copies of her poetry books and memoirs to give me, opening them up, showing the table of contents, explaining this and that. One of the books has pictures. "This is my son Jimmy," she says, pointing to a photo of a little boy, probably four years old. The first picture I've ever seen of him. He's smiling, looking up at the camera, hands on the waistband of his pants. Behind him is one of those cool old curvy black cars that I don't know the name of. In another picture he's standing on the beach, three years old, hands sticking out from his sides, palms up, going "what?" Concerned little face. Hi Jimmy. I never knew you. I wonder if we would have liked each other.

Ina is talking about poetry. "I don't like the modern poetry, it's so jarring. I like poetry to rhyme, that's my generation. It's very comforting for old people." I suggest maybe she would like hip hop, but I don't think she hears me. She flips through the book and finds a poem she likes.

"The Inevitable—what do you think that is?" she asks.

"Death?" I say.

"That's right, Nomy. Death." Flip flip flip. "The eighth wonder of the world, do you know what that is?"

I shake my head.

"A belief in yourself." She points to the line and looks up at me. "You don't pray to a God that's out there—you pray for strength inside yourself." I nod that I understand.

Without pausing for dramatic effect, she moves on to a poem about infidelity, telling me about a program she saw on Maury. "The Black people are so promiscuous," she says, eyes wide with concern. I stare back and say "that's a racist stereotype," not knowing if those words mean anything to her. "How do we help them get out of that?" she asks me, and I walk out of the room and start packing my things to go. She follows me, upset that I'm upset. I inform her there are Jewish people who are promiscuous, and Black people who have never had sex, and if she doesn't want to be scared by TV then she shouldn't watch it.

"Oh, I know. TV isn't real." I love the way she talks as if she invented every idea. It reminds me of me. She tells me about a Jewish neighbor who married a Black woman, how his mother wouldn't accept their marriage, until they had children. "It's never the children's fault," she tells me. "You have to accept people. It's all about accepting everybody's differences." I agree, putting my bag over my shoulder and grabbing my cane.

"You be careful getting home. You're very brave."

"I travel a lot," I say. "I'll be fine, don't worry about me."

"Your grandmother was very concerned about you. She loved you very much."

"I loved her too."

"Very, very, concerned," she says. I can tell she's about to launch into something but I can't stand to hear any more of her opinions about me.

"I'll see you soon Ina," I tell her.

"Look, I'm 95, hopefully I'll be released from this soon," she says.

"Don't die yet."

"Why not?"

"I want to spend more time with you."

She walks me to the door. "You've really made my day," she tells me in the same worried tone as always. She is trying to look at me but she can't hold her head up so I duck down and smile up at her. "There you are!" she says, smiling now. "You look just like you did when you were a baby."

I walk out into the hot heat of the little suburban street and make my way toward the El-train station. I hope I look confident and powerful in case she or anyone else is watching. I see a firefly.

Hi, I say. You look fancy.

It blinks on and off for me. I breathe with relief at the ease of communication.



and cotton candy—what a sweet idea . . . for an amusement park. The charm of this quaint concept fades considerably when applied to paychecks. Particularly, my paycheck. I suddenly find myself working the same job I worked as a teenager. There is no glamour in this mode of time travel: no DeLorean, no hot mom, no Johnny B Goode guitar solo. I find myself thrust back into time, a grown-ass woman squatting in a sandbox.

But I'm not bummed. On the contrary, I feel quite content. Why? Because I'm working at the comic-book store. I would (and have and do) put up with all manner of nonsense in order to be close to the comics. It's been this way for as long as I can remember. In the 1950s movie *The Bad Seed* (one of John Waters' faves), they propose the existence of an *evil* gene. That a person can be genetically predisposed to become evil. A preposterous theory, but one that I wholeheartedly believe in, as I have had a similar experience. I have inherited the *nerd* gene. It comes from my father's side. The man whose office is covered with statues of Vampirella and Jabba the Hut and Viking armies is the very same man who took me to comic-book stores as a kid and bought me *Howard the Duck* comics and *Mad* magazine. He's the same man who tried to bond with me this past Christmas by drunk driving and listening to Black Sabbath (it was sweet). On this drunken voyage, he told me, "I don't understand you at all . . . you're just like me." It's a seemingly contradictory statement, unless you comprehend the nerd mindset. Feeling so alienated from someone who shares your own blood, even your own mannerisms, is a perfect example of the existential dilemma heroes grapple with all the time in comic books.

The 1990s were an ideal time to be a punk girl into comics. Nowadays, the only good underground comic that comes out with any regularity is *Love and Rockets*, and it's only quarterly. In the '90s, you had *Dirty Plotte* and *Trailer Trash* and *Real Stuff* and, everyone's favorites, *Eightball* and *Hate*.

I'm going to go ahead and lay my cards on the table: *Eightball* creator Dan Clowes was a celebrity to me. The boner I had for him could wrap around the earth three times. My own backwards version of a *Tiger Beat* centerfold. When he would come into the comic-book store, I would get real nervous and hand him his change all balled up and wet from my sweaty palms. I'd be, like, "Huh-huh-huh-here's yer change, muh-mister Clowes." I arranged to interview him for my fanzine, *Tales of Blarg*, during this time, only I got so worked up and nervous that I was overcome by a massive case of the Shits and had to reschedule! True Life Confessions! When we finally did the interview, I was still so nervous that I blabbed the entire time. It was like this:

We have a historic amusement park nearby that offers 1906 prices every Monday and Tuesday night. Sixty cent rides and hot dogs

BLARG: How much of Eightball is taken from real life experiences?

CLOWES: Well, I . . .

BLARG: Because I saw that Punks vs. the Pigs volleyball game in there, and I know a guy who really did that! And then this other time . . . yabba yabba yabbablahdeebalahblah . . . ad infinitum.

If I had any shame at all, I would not be telling you this right now. Luckily for the sake of telling a story, not only do I have no shame, I never learned my lesson! When Dan came in to the comic shop this time around, our interaction was mature and casual. However, I still felt compelled to draw a picture to entertain my co-worker, Uel. Frame number one featured a drawing of a dry chair entitled "Before Clowes came in." Frame number two was a drawing of the same chair, dripping with pee, entitled "After Clowes Came In." I pass it to Uel after Dan leaves—*haw haw, highly amusing*—and he sets the drawing down. Seconds later, Dan comes back up to the counter to buy something he forgot. Did he see the drawing? I don't know, but it was *right there* in front of him. It was like getting busted writing "I ♥ Dan" 10,000 times on my school binder.

My favorite comic book of that era was Peter Bagge's *Hate*. Yeah, there's a *Hate Annual* that comes out now, but I still miss the old *Hate*. It had the intimacy of the autobio comics that were popularized around that time, except that it didn't just feature some moon-eyed feeb waxing poetic over his sorry existence. There was action! Barfing and insane housemates and venereal warts and the schtupping of girls wearing potato-sack dresses and fisticuffs. Buddy Bradley was a despicable everyman, but I loved him so.

There has been a decades-long campaign to *legitimize* comic books which seems to be especially heated right now. Everyone, from Adam Brody's character on the *OC* to the *New York Times*, has officially declared comic books a valid form of artistic and literary expression. Something new that has been frequently occurring during my current stint filling in at the comic-book store is the string of novices who come in and ask for the "intelligent" comics that they heard about on NPR. My rational mind tells me that this is a good thing, that, yes, comics are indeed a "valid" form of expression and that a lot of people stand to be positively effected if they let go of the stigma and open a comic book. That's my rational mind, though. Usually I shut the door on that snoozefest and listen to my gut. And my gut tells me: These people are a bad element. What place does pretension have in comics? We're talking about juvenile wish fulfillment. Whether it's an underground comic about a dude who gets a girl or a superhero comic about a wimpy bespectacled guy by day, who dons underoos and nobly fights crime by night. It rules. There's no room to set up staid limitations on plotlines that are intrinsically ridiculous (even when clever). Are we going to load up the pipe, adjust our bifocals, and read *Swamp Thing* on the next episode of Masterpiece Theatre? Take a cue from *Swamp Thing* and similar lessons learned in a million comics: beware of powerful people with alligator

smiles. This seeming acceptance by the literati could be another insidious way that the straights try to take our humanity from us. If this was a comic book plotline, these are the people who would be putting up condos in the Okeefenokey swamp. There would be a cute logo of Pogo on the gate, but the foundation would be built over the bludgeoned bodies of Albert and Beauregard and Porkypine and all the rest of Pogo's pals.

Yesterday, a regular customer reached across a hip-looking, sharply-dressed lady to grab his backpack and accidentally bumped her. She huffed, "The word is *excuse me!*" His response was to bolt out of the store without even looking at her. If this had happened in a fast food joint or something, I would find her reaction appropriate, but not in the comic-book store. The comic-book store is home for the socially bumbling. A person has no right to *slum* it and then chastise people for how they behave in their own home. How do you act around other cultures? Do you go to a starving nation and give them a lecture on proper nutrition? No, you don't. When you're in Rome, you do as the friggin' Romans do. You don't come along and inflict your own customs and morality on somebody else's culture. That's called colonialism, Jack. Where is a 40-year-old man with braces expected to feel at ease if not at the comic-book store? I love the freedom that comes from working in a shunned medium. Square lifestyles make me feel queasy and it may be childish, but I welcome any division of Us vs. Them. You can take your need to justify enjoying comics (or anything else, for that matter) by emphasizing their intellectual merit and artistic contribution to the American cultural landscape, and shove it up your ass. Meanwhile, I will be over here watching Maggie and Hopey spy on Alarma or maybe pondering "Dori Seda didn't really fuck her dog . . . did she?"

...

My current suggested reading list for comics is as follows: *Underworld* — Kaz; *Buddy Does Seattle* — Peter Bagge; *Locas In Love* and *Locas* — Jaime Hernandez; *Eightball* and *Ghost World* — Dan Clowes; *Dori Stories* — Dori Seda; *100 Demons* — Lynda Barry; *When I Get Old* — Gabrielle Bell; *A Child's Life* — Phoebe Gloeckner; *Y: The Last Man* — Vaughan and Guerra; anything by Dave K; *Deep Girl* — Ariel Bourdeaux (good luck finding it, though); *Unloveable* — Esther Pearl Watson; Jerome Gaynor; Alexopoulos; *Complete Peanuts 1950-1954*; *Kramers Ergot #4*; anything by Amy "Amos" Moon; some R. Crumb; *Peepshow* — Joe Matt; *Ed the Happy Clown* — Chester Brown; *Swamp Thing* — either Alan Moore or Bernie Wrightson; *Spaniel Rage* — Vanessa Davis; *New York Stories* — Julie Doucet; the *Twisted Sisters* anthology; all comics by Chris Murdoch; and tons more. I could go on all night!

...

I told my friend, Chris McVicker, about a fistfight that broke out while I was working at the comic-book store. It was incredible!

Chris' only response:

"Were they using lightsabers?" ☺

My fanzine, *Tales of Blarg* #9, should be out by the time you read this. Check www.gimmeaction.com for updates and ordering info.

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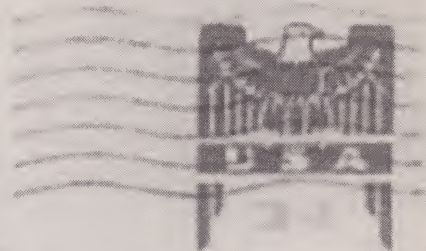
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Lady of the Lake

by Trinie Dalton

Amy and I pushed our beds together to make an island piled with stiff, green camp blankets and stuffed animals we'd brought from home. We hung by our knees from the headboards and took pictures of each other with monster hair. I looked like I'd been electrocuted. She looked hot like a red-faced rock star, chugging Gatorade offstage. That's the kind of life I wanted—to be the lady in tight leather pants who wiped her sweat off with a bandana—not the lady cooking chili at our Girl Scout Camp.

We spent Saturday horseback riding, not out on a trail through vines and waterfalls, but in a metal corral. Amy, who was riding behind me, said, "Remember in *Friday the 13th* when the girl gets stabbed in the bathroom?"

We'd been watching horror movies. Amy was a year older than me, so her mom did the renting. *Friday the 13th*, *Hellraiser*, and *Repo Man* were the first "R" movies we saw. We chose them because we liked their boxes. *Repo Man* was boring—something about green glowing stuff and dumb beer guys taking cars away from people for some unknown reason. The others I got into—men gone on killing rampages. I knew a house up the street from mine where the son killed his parents with his dad's shotgun because they wouldn't buy him a Texas Instruments computer.

"Remember that scene when they're playing strip Monopoly and smoking a joint?" I asked, not really knowing what a

joint was, much less that strip games were real. I said that extra loud, so the other girls in the corral would hear.

"Last summer I went to a camp that looked just like that one in the movie," she said. "The manager had a witch room where he took girls, to do spells on and stuff."

I believed her. We'd written several spells ourselves that were effective only when recited while riding our bicycles in circles inside my garage. One went:

Father time,
Father clock,
Make us disappear—
And reappear around the block.

We'd ride our bikes around the block, always winding up in the garage again, then circle the water heater five times while looking down at the ground. The dizziness this induced convinced us that the spell had worked.

"Did he do any spells on you?" I asked, only guessing what kinds of spells a man would employ.

"You wish," she said.

Sunday we swam in the lake. This life-guard, Rita, caught a rainbow trout. She seemed semi-awesome in her Girl Scout shirt since she'd cut the sleeves off and frayed the edges to look like a metalhead. She removed the hook from its mouth and let us stroke the fish with our index fingers. Feeling the fish made camp less dorky—animals were cool. Raccoons dug through the trash dumpsters, frogs hopped along the

creek that ran through commons, and hawks swooped down through the sugar pine trees that circled our cabins. That night we stayed up whispering.

"Did you touch that fish Rita had in her hands today?" Amy asked.

"Yeah, it was kind of smelly. Did you?"

"It reminded me of a tongue. You know how tongues are gross?"

"I wouldn't know about tongues," I said dryly. "You're the tongue master."

Amy huffed. "Not even." She had French kissed a boy a few months back. "You're the tongue master. You probably practice with your dog."

"I wish," I said. "Dogs are hot."

Amy was quiet. It took her a minute to decide if I was being sarcastic.

Then she turned her flashlight on under her chin. Her face turned red again, only this time it was glowing and eerie, not enviable and hot.

"Hey," I said. "Remember in *Friday the 13th*, that part at the end where the girl's in the boat after Jason's mom is dead, and Jason comes out of the lake all slimy like he melted in a fire?"

"Yeah, what about it?" Amy said.

"I know this sounds stupid, but do you think anyone could live underwater like that? Because when we were swimming today before Rita found the fish, I felt something grab my foot, like a hand." I knew this was hard to believe but it was true.

"It was probably a fish," she said, and switched the flashlight off.

Before school let out for summer, we'd been reading *King Arthur and the Knights*

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS: Keep those submissions rolling in—and please adhere to the following guidelines: keep your work around 1600 words or less, write your name and e-mail address on the story itself, and send files in rtf or doc format to ppfiction@yahoo.com.

of the Round Table. I liked it because I was sure unicorns would appear in the stories. I figured Guinevere must have had a pet unicorn in the forest somewhere, even if she didn't tell Arthur or Lancelot about it. The Lady of the Lake freaked me out—she came out of the water looking dead but beautiful, holding Excalibur up to Arthur who was in the boat sailing to Avalon. This woman in a dripping robe convinced me that people could live underwater somehow. I wondered if she'd half-drowned and come back to life, or had gills on her sides that were hidden by her white dress. If that was her in our camp lake, it was okay. Still, I didn't want a lady groping at my ankles while I swam. Also, if that were true, maybe the bottom of the lake was covered with swords poking up. *I'm lucky I didn't get my toes sliced off*, I thought.

It was a three-day weekend camp. We waited in line for food all Monday morning, then Amy and I headed back to the lake for more fish and swords. She was secretly scared, I could tell. She stayed around the edges, tiptoeing in squishy mud and algae. I was scared too, but I wanted our camp trip to have an R-rating so I'd have stories to tell my friends at school. Watching scary movies made me think my life would be dull until something awful happened. Otherwise, I didn't see the point. Otherwise, why would my parents have sent me to this crap-hole? My need for adventure was half horror movie and half medieval. I wanted to rescue Amy from a mysterious underwater sea hag.

"Come out here," I yelled to the shore.

"No way, it's too cold," she yelled back.

"There's a warm spot," I lied. Then I pictured a shark swimming under me and got a little panicky. "There's a shark out here too," I added.

Amy swam out. I think she took the shark thing as my tease that she was chicken, but I didn't mean that, really.

"This is *not* a warm spot," she said, paddling her legs furiously to keep her head and neck above water. "I'm swimming over to those plants."

The far side of the lake was thick with lilipads. Dragonflies hovered above them, glittery in the sunlight. No frogs were sitting on the leaves, sadly. Still, I thought the plants were pretty—they looked like dark, shiny bubbles on the water's surface. I pictured camp counselors canoeing through the lilipads at night, and I thought how romantic it would be to make out while they shined around the boat.

I followed Amy, staying several feet behind her. The lake was actually quite small, like a large pond. The waves were cold but the deeper parts were warm. I worried there were fish huddling together in the warm parts. I felt them brush against my toes. I pictured Lady of the Lake—fish skimming over her face, Excalibur glinting in her hand. Just then Amy yelled that she was tangled in the weeds. She splashed around in a bit of a frenzy so I knew she wasn't joking.

She was up to her neck in lilipads, and her head looked like some weird balloon flower. *Pretty flower*, I thought, pushing my way through the watery jungle. I was in

a worried daze. When I reached Amy, her legs were so enclosed in vines that I knew I'd have to dive to get her out. She held her breath to stay afloat, puffing out her cheeks, which made her look even more balloon-like.

Once I'd dove down, I knew there was no way to swim back up.

I was too busy struggling to think. But I did see swords surrounding me—which I later realized were only beams of light shining through the lilipads. Peculiar how swords can be for you or against you—there's no middle ground. Except this time. The swords created an imaginary trap, a cage almost. Then they lit my path upwards. I tried to make myself as tall as possible, then prepared to launch.

Someone pulled me out and dragged me coughing and gagging back to shore. I felt like an idiot. It was the same life-guard—the semi-awesome one who'd caught the fish.

"Why didn't you two girls call for me earlier?" Rita asked. She wrapped me in a towel and shooed a crowd of girls away.

"I thought I could get her out," I said weakly.

She was so nice and heroic it almost made me barf. She was buff and had long blond hair. She wasn't beautiful and dead. I was a grateful, jealous little Girl Scout. She had moted me hard. She was my Lady of the Lake, good *not* evil, and there was nothing I could do but lie about it. ©

Trinie Dalton's book of short stories, *Wide Eyed*, is due out from Akashic's Little House on the Bowery series this fall. The book she co-edited for McSweeney's, *Dear New Girl or Whatever Your Name Is*, is forthcoming.

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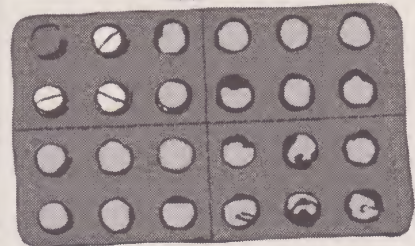
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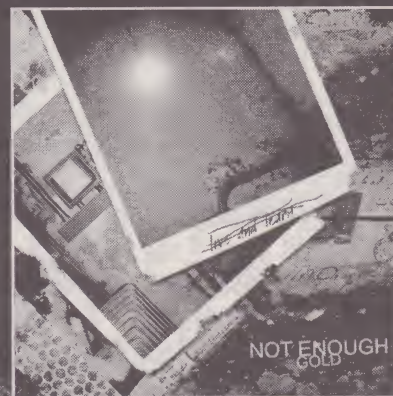
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Decorative Breads!

By Aaron Burkhalter

Few things are more satisfying than a beautiful steaming loaf of homemade bread. While plain bread is attractive on its own, easy molding and a simple glaze will elevate your plain dough into an impressive and attractive loaf of bread.

The following basic dough recipe is based off Jewish braided challah, but can be used with any of the decorative techniques below. The egg can be replaced with a little water to make the dough vegan. The sugar can be completely removed without any adverse effect on the recipe. If you prefer a whole wheat bread, replace a portion of the white bread flour with whole wheat flour. If you already have a bread recipe you like, skip over the recipe entirely and try out the different forms and glazes below with your own dough.

Making the dough

½ C warm water
2 tsp yeast
4 C white bread flour
2 tsp salt
1-1 ½ C water
2 eggs
2 Tbs sugar
spare flour for kneading and shaping

Stir 2 teaspoons of yeast into the warm water and set aside. Sift the flour, salt, and sugar in a bowl. Make a depression like a well in the mix. Add the rest of the water and the eggs, beaten, into this well. Begin stirring from the inside out, mixing flour into the liquid.

Form the mixed dough into a ball and knead on a floured surface for about 15 minutes. Under-kneading the dough will result in denser bread that does not rise well, and is therefore less sexy. Don't worry about over-kneading at this stage. If your dough is too sticky after kneading for some time, sprinkle a small handful of flour onto your kneading surface and work it in until the dough is smooth and elastic, but not wet.

Place the bread in a lightly oiled bowl and cover. Let the bread rise for 2-3 hours. Test the bread by pressing a wet finger a 1/4 inch into the dough. If the dough bounces back fairly quickly, it needs more time to rise. If it doesn't, it's ready.

Once the bread has risen, deflate the dough on a floured surface, pressing as much air out as possible. You are now ready to shape the dough.

Split loaf

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Form the dough into a round loaf and set on a lightly oiled baking sheet. Cover the loaf, and leave to rise for an hour. Once the dough has risen, brush with an egg glaze (see below) and sprinkle with poppy seeds, or any other kind of seed. With a sharp knife slash no more than 1/4 inch deep along the entire length of the loaf and down the sides. This will allow the loaf to split apart slightly while baking. Immediately bake for 45-55 minutes.

Braids and Twists

To form the dough into ropes, cut it into 2, 3, or 4 equal parts, depending on how you want to braid your loaf. Take each ball and stretch it into a rope by alternately squeezing, pulling and rolling the dough. Do not overwork the dough at this stage or your bread will not rise properly. If the dough starts to get too springy and tough, cover the dough to keep it from drying out and let it "rest" for 10-15 minutes. Each rope should end up approximately 16-18 inches long.

Two rope twist — Take your ropes and pinch the one end of each together. Then twist the ropes around each other until there is no more dough. Pinch the other end of the ropes together. Place on a greased baking sheet. Let it rise for 45 minutes to 1 hour.

Three rope braid — Take 3 dough ropes and pinch the one end of each together. Position the dough so the pinched off end is away from you and the loose ropes are pointed toward you. Number the ropes 1, 2, and 3, from left to right. Pull rope 1 over rope 2 (placing between ropes 2 and 3), and then 3 over 1 (placing it between ropes 2 and 1). Renumber the ropes and repeat until there is no more dough. Pinch the open ends of the ropes together and carefully place on a greased baking sheet. Let it rise for 45 minutes to 1 hour.

Four rope braid — This is the most common way to braid challah. Number the ropes 1, 2, and 3, from left to right. Pull rope 1 over 2, and rope 3 over 4. Pull rope 4 over rope 1, placing it between ropes 1 and 2. Renumber the ropes, and repeat until there is no more dough. Pinch the ends together and place on a greased baking sheet. Let it rise for 45 minutes to 1 hour.

Regardless of braiding style, after the loaf has risen, brush the loaf with an egg glaze and sprinkle poppy seeds over the whole loaf. Place in a preheated oven at 400 degrees. Bake for 40-50 minutes.

Glazes

The type of glaze brushed on a loaf affects the crust. Basic dough made with flour, water, salt, and yeast will be pale in color and medium stiff in texture.

Butter glaze — Glazing bread with melted butter adds a little fat and flavor, makes the crust soft, and gives it a light amber color. Use margarine as a vegan substitute.

Egg glaze — The above recipes call for an egg glaze, which consists of one beaten egg and a tablespoon of water. Glazing bread with egg gives it a shiny finish and a dark amber color. It also makes seeds stick to the bread.

Vegan glaze — Mix a couple heaping spoonfuls of cornstarch with enough water to make a very thick liquid. This acts a lot like the egg glaze, adding a shine and holding seeds and other toppings to the bread. ☺

DIY SEX EARLY TO BED

by sex lady searah

Dear Sex Lady,

Here's the deal. I met this guy at a bar, took him home and we had some fucking great sex. I like him, so we started hanging out. But every other time we have gotten to the no-pants point, he can't get it up. What's the deal here? I am trying to be all cool about it, but I can't help feeling that he's not into me even though he swears he is. I really like him but am starting to get the feeling he doesn't like me so much. Or maybe there is something physically wrong with him? Any ideas?

Well, first of all, as many men will tell you, dicks can certainly have a mind of their own. We all know guys get erections when they don't want 'em (hello gym class!) and then sometimes they can't get 'em when they do want 'em (yes, it does happen to everyone).

Since you met him in a bar, I am going to assume that he was probably drinking that first night. For some people, that bit of alcohol gives them a self-esteem boost that leads them to be more forward and bold than they would normally be. Maybe he felt an alcohol-induced surge of confidence the first time. In addition, sex with someone for the first time can be so freakin' exciting that our body is ready to go at it right away . . . sometimes way faster than our normal response time (this is true for guys and gals). It is entirely possible that he is a more reserved, shy or nervous person than you saw that first night. I am thinking that he now has a bad case of the nerves or performance anxiety. If the sex you had the first night was so fucking amazing, maybe, even subconsciously, he is worried that it can never be that good again, and his dick is responding to that anxiety by going limp. Our minds are really good at fucking with our bodies when we don't want them to.

The fact that he got it up the first time is an indication that there is probably nothing physically wrong with him. If a guy wakes up sometimes (or always) with an erection and/or can masturbate "successfully," there is nothing to indicate that this would be a medical problem. That said, it is always a good idea to check with a doctor if one has concerns about one's body. But more likely, your hottie has a bad case of jitters that he just can't shake. And once you have that first raging softy, you are anticipating the next one, which of course helps greatly for it to happen again. It is a mean, vicious cycle. Something similar happens with women

as well. Women who are used to getting wet and enjoying penetration can have a painful or bad experience; then the next time they are in a sexy situation, their brain remembers what happened last time and can involuntarily react and make the sex uncomfortable again. Stupid brain.

There is also the possibility of medication to consider. If a guy is taking prescription drugs for depression, it can seriously affect his ability to get and maintain a woody. If that is the case, he should talk to his doctor about trying a new drug with lower sexual side effects. It is great to not be depressed anymore, but not being able to fuck like you want to can make one very sad.

There is of course the possibility that he just isn't into you, but I doubt it. Most people will not get into repeated sexual situations with someone they aren't attracted to. Granted, there are exceptions to this (people do a lot of stupid things), but I would think that is the least likely answer to your problem and I want to stress that in a situation like this, a softy usually isn't an indication of a dude's attraction level.

If I were you and I liked this guy I would do a couple of things:

- Hang out one time and don't jump right into the bedroom. Go out so that it is not even a possibility. Take some pressure off the guy and let him see that you enjoy him even with his pants on.

- When you are getting busy later, don't rush it. Spend time on other sexual/sensual activities: massage, kissing, having him pleasure you.

- Maybe get some toys to lighten up the mood: a cockring, a vibe or some yummy body candy. If you are up for it, maybe rent some sex-positive porn.

- Spend time doing a sexy show for him. Everyone loves a lap dance!

If he can't get it up again you should talk and decide if you two still want to try to be lovers or fuckbuddies. If you guys are both into being a couple or at least regular partners, maybe he needs to go talk to a counselor or doctor. Or you could always just be friends. ©

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DIY food

EVERYTHING THAT EATS, LIVES

by stacey gengo

Cookie Swap

If Cookie Monster is any indication, Americans love their cookies. Milk and cookies are part of the American vernacular and appetite. It's often the first food kids learn to make from scratch—usually from their grandmothers. This was definitely true for the kids of our family. My grandmother's chocolate chip cookies were legendary. Anyone having a birthday was certain to receive a shirt box full of chocolate chip cookies when grandmother arrived. It was always the same department store box filled with her distinctive small crisp cookies wrapped in tissue paper. Plates of her cookies graced every holiday table.

The cookie has long been a part of American history. The word itself stems from an Anglicized version of the Dutch *koekje*, the diminutive of *koek*, or cake.

New Amsterdam began a tradition of handing out these *koekjes* on New Year's Day, soon enough leading to the birth of the cookie in New York City. Often part of a celebration or special event, the cookie has always been associated with the home baker. There is nothing quite like a home-baked cookie, or the generations old recipe it stems from.

A freshly baked cookie from home seems to be a rarity these days with the modern conveniences of boxed cookie mixes or refrigerated and frozen cookie dough. These are just a slight step above mass-produced packaged cookies, which originated with the proliferation of cheap sugar. With advertisements aimed toward making the working woman's life easier, packaged cookies were just one convenient answer to keeping the family fed and happy.

My mom falls into this category. She rarely bakes, especially at the one time we really would like her to: special occasions. When she does get around to it, we give her a hard time about using refrigerated

dough; although the effort is appreciated, the taste just isn't the same. And we're all in the same boat; there is never enough time to bake. Sure, it's an excuse, but it's generally true.

That's why this time of year is the perfect time for a cookie swap. It's the best way to enjoy many varieties of home-baked cookies with the effort of making just one batch. Host a get-together and ask your friends to bring over one batch of home-baked cookies. Display them all, provide some take home containers, and pick and choose your way to a delicious mix of sweets. Then, you can have your assorted home-baked holiday cookies with the barest minimum of a kitchen workout. ☺

Mrs. Wakefield's Cookies

In 1930, Mrs. Ruth Wakefield made her first batch of Toll House cookies at the historic Tollhouse Inn, once a halfway resting point for carriages traveling between Boston and the port town of New Bedford. While making a brown sugar cookie, Mrs. Wakefield added some pieces of a semisweet chocolate bar, substituting for unsweetened chocolate. She assumed the chocolate would melt during baking, which instead merely softened. Luckily, she didn't toss the batch; rather she named them the Toll House cookie. They were a hit; Betty Crocker even broadcast the recipe on her radio show. Working with Mrs. Wakefield, the Nestlé company developed a scored chocolate bar for baking, making it easier to break the bar into pieces. The cookie recipe was printed on the wrapper. A few years later, Nestlé bought the rights to the recipe from Mrs. Wakefield. The Toll House chocolate chip cookie is now legendary and a term for the cookie baked with the Nestlé chocolate chips. This is a modified version.

Chocolate Chip Cookies
makes 30 cookies

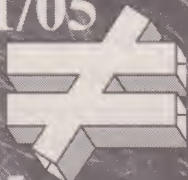
- ½ C packed light brown sugar
- ½ C granulated sugar
- 1 C unsalted butter, softened
- 1 egg
- ½ teaspoon vanilla
- 1 C plus 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- 1 C chopped walnuts or pecans, coarsely chopped
- 1 C semisweet chocolate chips

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Butter baking sheets.
2. Beat butter and sugars together until light in color, add egg and vanilla.
3. Sift flour, salt and baking soda together into a separate bowl.
4. Add to the butter mixture, stirring just until blended.
5. Gently stir in chocolate and nuts.
6. Drop by teaspoonful onto the baking sheets, about an inch apart.
7. Bake until edges turn golden and the cookies are still soft in the middle, about 10 minutes.
8. Transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.
9. Store in an airtight container.

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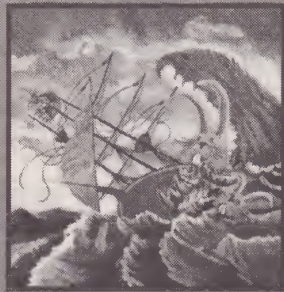
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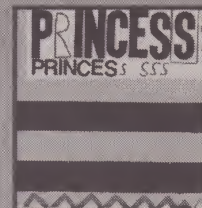
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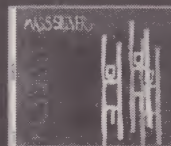
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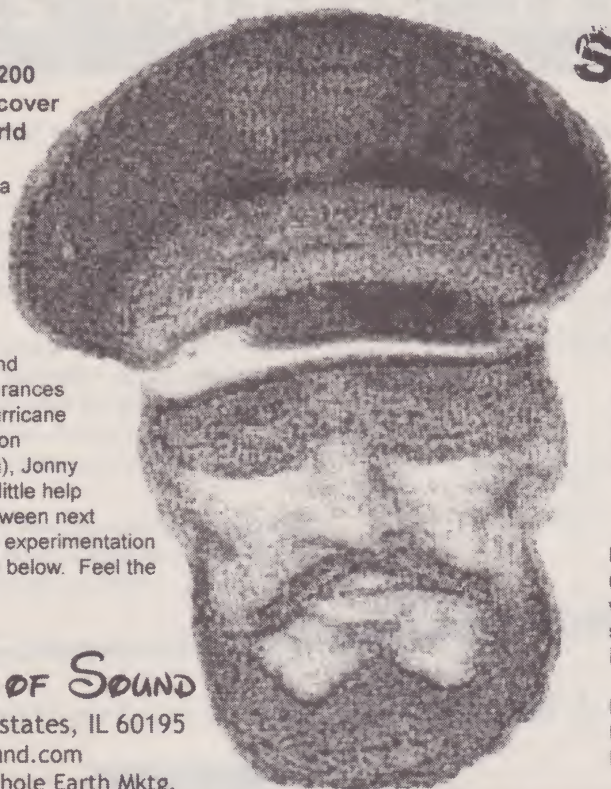
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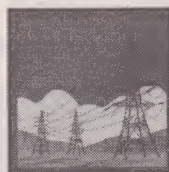
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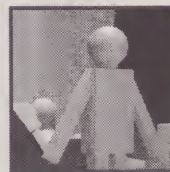
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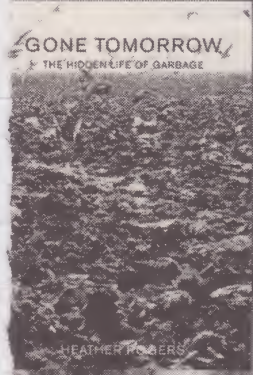
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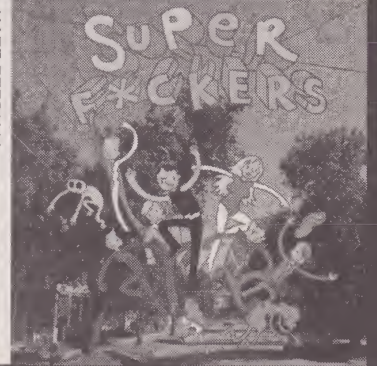
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REVIEWS

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MUSIC



Belle and Sebastian – *Push Barman To Open Old Wounds*, 2xCD

Sometimes it's hard to imagine that Belle and Sebastian are creating music in the here and now. Though their songs are able to transcend time, there is something about them so gentle and beautiful that lends itself to simpler times, before everyone was constantly connected to Starbucks, cell phones, and the interweb.

Lucky for us, Belle and Sebastian are not

a footnote of a bygone era, but a current reminder that taking it down a notch is quite acceptable. This latest release, *Push Barman to Open Old Wounds*, is a two disc collection of the EPs released from 1997-2001, which includes all of the lyrics, several pictures, and the essays "Lazy Line Painter Jane" and "Three, Six, Nine Seconds of Light." As there is nothing new, longtime fans will probably own everything, but for the late bloomers or new fans, this is a great way to complete your collection in one go. The songs contained on this set only strengthen the fact that Belle and Sebastian, with their striking melodies and grand storytelling, are the best pop band out there. Just one listen to "Lazy Line Painter Jane" will prove this. This duet between main man Stuart Murdoch and guest vocalist Monica Queen tells the story of a girl wanting to escape her ho-hum life. It starts off with a bouncy guitar and slowly rolls itself into a frenzy. Phil Spector would undoubtedly approve. "Le Pastie De La Bourgeoisie" gives us a taste of '60s surf music through the eyes of a Scotsman. On "Put the Book Back on the Shelf," the band adds swaying strings and Spanish flavored horns to this playful acoustic guitar based track. The opening song on disc two, "This is Just a Modern Rock Song," is one of their best non-album tracks and one of my favorites. The song opens with a melancholy feel as Murdoch sings over a quiet guitar. As the song meanders, it's punctuated by two lengthy orchestral swells and fantastic lyrics like, "This is just a modern rock song / this is just a sorry lament / we're four boys in corduroys / we're not terrific but we're competent." A few tracks later is the unbelievably funky "Legal Man," which sounds like it came right off the soundtrack of a '60s spy film. "Jonathan David," with its jangling guitars and whimsical keyboards, provides the perfect example of how great twee can sound. One of the final tracks, "I'm Waking Up to Us" begins with a slow drum beat, à la the Ronettes, but then quickly breaks away into a triumphant symphony about the end of a relationship. It's catchy and surprisingly upbeat (considering the subject), but that's Belle and Sebastian for you. They manage to tell their stories without having to shout, scream, and plead for attention. They sit back, play the music they want to play in the style they choose fitting. It might be a bit calmer, a bit more precious, but it's something that is necessary. *Push Barman to Open Old Wounds* proves that Belle and Sebastian are perfect messengers for these sped up times, letting us know that leisurely can be better. (MP)

Matador Record, 625 Broadway, New York, NY 10012, www.matadorrecords.com



Hate Eternal – *I, Monarch*, CD

My introduction to Hate Eternal came via the booklet to Cannibal Corpse's *The Bleeding*. Though released five years before Hate Eternal's debut, the liner notes held the first of many pieces to the puzzle. Taking a cue from what has to be countless metalheads in the '80s, I scoured the booklet to *The Bleeding* (and every other album I bought, for that matter) after my freshman year science teacher picked it up for me (long story),

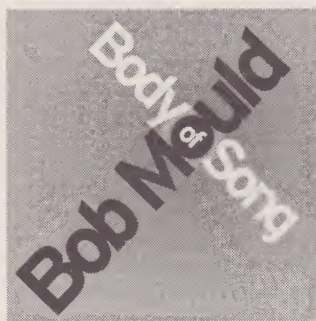
looking for any band names in "thank you" lists that sounded cool enough to pursue on my own. After that came the photos of the band, which are crucial for one reason: shirts. Though nowadays most metal bands seem to wear shirts to be ironic (Ratt) or to prove their old school credibility (Slayer), it wasn't long ago that guys in bands sported the shirts of bands they considered to be their peers, knowing that being seen in said shirt could bring a lesser-known group a few more curious fans. In professional wrestling, this is called giving someone the "rub," but I digress. In his photo on the inside of *The Bleeding*, Cannibal Corpse bassist Alex Webster is headbanging. Barely visible on his shirt is the letter "g" and underneath that, "pse." Written in a similar font as the Cannibal logo of the time, I was confused. I was already used to guys in metal bands wearing their own shirts (as weak as that is), but whatever shirt Webster was wearing was not one of his own, though similar. I could be wrong, but the only answer I could come up with through metal-based research was Ripping Corpse. Although other possibilities certainly exist, deciding on this has not only put me on a stellar musical path, but I have yet to hear of any bands named Killing Corpse, Hunting Corpse, or even Corpsing Corpse for that matter, so I've always just assumed I was right. Either way, that photo of half a shirt led me to Hate Eternal guitarist and vocalist Erik Rutan's first project, the aforementioned Ripping Corpse. Lauded by hardcore fans as one of the best and most groundbreaking technical death metal bands of the genre, their one record, 1991's *Dreaming with the Dead*, still remains vastly unappreciated by the majority of today's fans. After finally tracking down a copy (via total luck) of *Dreaming* in the \$.49 cut-out bin of a CD store, a need to know what happened to the band led me to the Rutan-less version of Ripping Corpse, Dim Mak, and to my own record collection in Morbid Angel's *Domination*, where Rutan had turned up playing second guitar. Soon after, Rutan, along with drummer Tim Yeung, bassist Jared Anderson, and former Suffocation guitarist Doug Cerrito, showed up as side project Hate Eternal. As soon as their debut, *Conquering the Throne*, hit the shelves, I bought it. The record further affirmed my theory that any album with a sound clip of an explosion (preferably at the start of the disc) is awesome. Though repetitive, it satisfied the need for brutal, all out blasting death metal. Put on hold for more Morbid Angel duties, Hate Eternal returned three years later with *King of All Kings*, which featured the debut of current (and insanely fast) drummer Derek Roddy. Apparently, the throne had been conquered. Better production and slightly more musical diversity made the record more listenable than its predecessor, but the artwork was still too complex to look good on tour

About our reviews: We make every attempt to review all the records we receive (CD's, CD-R's, and vinyl only—as long as they're not released on a major label or one of its subsidiaries), but we reserve the right to not review something if we feel it isn't appropriate for Punk Planet. Also, due to the insane volume of mail we receive, some releases fall through the cracks. We're bi-monthly, so it can take up to five months for something to appear in the magazine, so send stuff early, and send it with as much contact information as possible. CD-R's that aren't promotional copies from labels or from CD-R only labels end up in the demo section, and reissues have their own section as well. Records marked with a picture of the album cover have been deemed noteworthy by that specific reviewer, for better or worse, and reviews under 100 words exclusively appear online at www.punkplanet.com. Please keep in mind that when sending your review, it might get trashed. The review is only that reviewer's opinion, and doesn't necessarily reflect the opinion of the entire magazine. Personally, I love Decapitated, but I think I'm in the minority over here. See what I'm saying? Any questions, concerns, or accolades can be directed to Dave Hofer at reviews@punkplanet.com. Please DO NOT call the office, as Dave is not there full-time. Thank you. Send your stuff to: Punk Planet, 4229 North Honore, Chicago, IL 60613.

This issue's review team: Dan Agacki (DA), Abbie Amadio (AJA), Eric Action (EA), Bill Angelbeck (BA), Mike Barron (MB), Anthony Bartkewicz (AB), Chris Burkhalter (CB), Jay Castaldi (JC), Vincent Chung (VC), Art Ettinger (AE), Tara Goe (TG), Eric Grubbs (EG), Emily Hausman (EH), Kari Jensen (KJ), Ari Joffe (AJ), Scott Jones (SJ), Ryan Leach (RL), Justin Marciniak (JM), Sean Moeller (SM), Sarah Moody (SBM), Scott Morrow (SJM), Mr. Dana Morse (DM), Brian Moss (BM), Bart Niedzialkowski (BN), Missy Paul (MP), Rex Reason (RR), Kyle Ryan (KR), Neal Shah (NS), Matt Siblo (MS), Tony Stasiek (TS). **Edited by Dave Hofer (DH).**

shirts. Flash forward three more years to present day. Hate Eternal has officially been announced as Rutan's full-time project, and the dedication shows. Now with no original members (save Rutan), the band exists as a three-piece and makes a lot of fucking noise. Right off the bat, "Two Demons" showcases the production that more death-metal records should have: warm guitars and bass, vocals right in the middle of the mix, and most importantly, natural sounding drums! The first lyrics on *I, Monarch* are "I am duality!" which makes me think that Rutan has done some serious soul searching in between records. "The Victorious Reign" has a nice beat about midway through, blasting, but with jazzy accents that suit the riff well. Speaking of riffs, Rutan clearly learned a thing or two during his Morbid Angel days, as his guitar work is completely non-traditional in the realm of death metal: lots of stops, starts, odd accents, and straight up melody are all evident and well-executed. The bass isn't really obvious on the record at all, which sucks, because that extra low-end is always appreciated. Toss in something that sounds like a didgeridoo on "To Know Our Enemies," and a weird instrumental track at the disc's end we have a winner. Aside from the lack of bass, my only complaint is the repetition of song titles within choruses (most notable on the title track), which gets old fast. Those two moments aside, Rutan and Co. have really done their part to keep straight-up death metal alive and creative. (DH)

Earache Records www.earache.com



Mould, Bob – *Body of Song*, CD

If you don't know who Bob Mould is, then you need to put down this magazine right now and buy *The Living End* or *Zen Arcade* by Hüsker Dü. Featuring Mould on guitar and vocals, Hüsker Dü played brilliant hardcore and emo before emo was even a word. Then, as if that wasn't enough, Mould formed the power trio Sugar and wrote more amazing songs that received serious radio play. He has also recorded several solo albums including

his latest, *Body of Song*, about which I have mixed feelings. Most of the songs here are great, including a couple that rank among his best work, but there are also a couple of tracks that make me wince. The CD starts with the keyboard intro of "Circles," which might sound foreign to some Mould fans who are unaware of his dabbling in electronic music under the name LoudBomb. "Circles" is a powerful and emotionally heavy song, something we expect from Bob. The next track "(Shine Your) Light Love Hope" is a full on house tune with a Kylie Minogue-style vocoder effect on the vocals, an effect that finds its way onto several of *Body of Song*'s songs. This is actually one of the best songs here, incorporating an excellent dance beat to make you shake your booty and a catchy melodic tune... the kind that could be stripped away to an acoustic guitar and stay intact. Guitar lovers need not worry, though, as there is tons of the six string on this CD. For example, the standout "Underneath Days," with its ruminating melody and steady beat courtesy of Fugazi's Brendan Canty on the skins. Mould tends to write about interpersonal relationships as on "Days of Rain," a bittersweet love song featuring the cello work of Amy Domingues. Then, changing up the mood is "Best Thing" with Bob's trademark fat guitar blast

bringing the Hüsker sound out from the attic. "High Fidelity" is a poignant ballad, but the major key musical progression and chiming bells sound a bit campy. Even the bass playing of Sugar's David Barbe can't save the tune from melting into cheese. "Missing You" comes next, sounding very refreshing in comparison. It cleanses the palette with a peppy and poppy tune that could have easily fit onto Sugar's *File Under Easy Listening*... bouncy guitar solo and all. The album ends with one of the highlights of Mould's career. Rife with lush guitars, "Beating Heart the Prize" is a winner in my book, starting with a couple of verses followed by some fleet finger work on the fret board. After another verse, the chorus enters with these lyrics: "Slapped across the face / trying to stay alive / hand emerging from the words / win the beating heart the prize." After another guitar solo and chorus, the song ends at six and a half minutes, proving Mould can keep up with the younger cats who are mostly just rehashing his back catalogue anyway. I'm happy to see that Bob hasn't lived up to his threats of abandoning the electric guitar altogether, and is still making strong, innovative albums. (SJ)

Yep Roc Records, PO Box 4821, Chapel Hill, NC 27515, www.yeproc.com



Pelican – *The Fire in Our Throats Will Beckon the Thaw*, CD

Last issue, I had the privilege of reviewing Pelican's new EP, *March Into the Sea*. Now, Pelican has released a new full-length, and damn, it smokes! You know what? Forget that I said "full-length." Try the word epic. The masters of instrumental stoner metal have done it again, but this time they've added a new twist. It seems as though touring with Japanese post-rockers Mono has influenced Pelican, because their new songs have a bit of a post-rock feel thrown in. *Australasia*, the band's first full-length, was for the majority a metal record. Heavy, slow, and head-banging, *Australasia* was truly epic. While there were very clear dynamic changes, Pelican didn't venture too much into the world of post-rock, mainly sticking to the wonderful wide world of metal. Their latest release, however, has crossed the bridge, and bridged the gap between Meshuggah fans and Explosions in the Sky fans. *The Fire in Our Throats Will Beckon the Thaw* includes clean, droney, delayed guitar which builds ambience during slower breakdowns, as well as Pelican's trademark distorted low end and tom roll drum fills. Acoustic guitars fit in somewhere between heavy riffs and screeching feedback, but when all seems quiet, an explosion will occur, and Pelican is back at it. The untitled fourth tune on the record is a four and a half minute song comprised solely of acoustic guitar, which separates "March Into the Sea" and "Red Ran Amber," the two 11-minute marathons on the record. "March Into the Sea" ends noisily, and the untitled track proves to be the perfect segue between the two longer tracks. Pelican manages to have four songs on this album that are over nine minutes long, and somehow, they keep it all interesting without making me twiddle my thumbs and wait for the next song. I enjoy what they've given me: how each riff leads to another, and each heavy section leads to a quiet breakdown. With Pelican, you know what to expect, but you just don't know how they're

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHTS



Dan Agacki (DA)

Black Flag, *First Four Years*. When I was in sixth grade, "Smells Like Teen Spirit" was all over the radio. The thought of liking the song never entered my mind until the day my mom asked, "Do you actually like this?" Naturally, I became a complete Nirvana fanatic shortly thereafter, but they were just the topsoil. Kurt Cobain mentioned Black Flag in numerous interviews, so I knew I had to track down one of their releases. *First Four Years* was the first release I found, and it drastically changed my life. All three singers had amazing vocal styles. The guitar work was a thing of genius. Every piece of the Black Flag puzzle was completely jaw dropping. The lyrical topics of songs like "Nervous Breakdown" and "I've Had It" seemed to echo the sentiments of my 11 year-old brain. It was great to finally hear a band I could truly identify with. Also, how could I not love a band that pulled off covering "Louie Louie"? It was a combination of nihilism and destruction with a sense of humor. The mixture was a stroke of genius. Black Flag ruined all music to come. Sex Pistols? Clash? Ramones? Keep 'em. I've got Black Flag.

In My Head: Sugar, *File Under: Easy Listening*; Crime Desire, *We Hate All Life and live*; Flamin' Groovies, *Shake Some Action*; Foghat, *Fool For The City*; Verbal Assault, On.



Abbie Amadio (AJA)

Q And Not U, *No Kill No Beep Beep*. Sadly, this summer Q and Not U decided to call it quits, agreeing that they had taken the band as far as it could go. But what in their eyes might seem a natural course of events feels premature. Beginning with 2000's *No Kill, No Beep Beep* and ending with 2004's *Power*, Q and Not U were achieving a uniqueness and richness in their music, lyrics, and live performances that is hard to come by these days. They were one of the few bands I'd leave work early and drive a couple of hours to see. Though there were mixed reactions to the funked-up, maybe "too dancey" *Power*, the band had developed their lyrics, impassioned by social and political issues, starting with their debut. There is a genuine concern in their credos, a concern that seems to stem from personal responsibility and consciousness, not allegiances to record labels or scenes. Albeit more cryptic and harder to interpret than later albums, *No Kill* breathed life into the boredom that can be lyric writing/reading. Also, it gave a pulse to the tired post-punk/post-emo genre, mixing elements of reggae and funk with the angularity of nineties punk. Sadly, there will be even fewer shows to look forward to now that they're gone. But here's to staying the Dischord route and reforming, reforming, and reforming again. All under new band names, of course.

Currently listening to: *Weird War, Illuminated By the Light*; the Sea and Cake, *The Fawn*; Sleater-Kinney, *The Woods*; Radio K; KRS Video Fanzine III



Bili Angelbeck (BA)

Come, Eleven:Eleven. Come had one of the greatest band names—a word that takes on different meanings when said in isolation. But, they were more than just a great name—they were an excellent band conjuring blues-based art rock. *Eleven:Eleven* was their first album, released in 1992, and it's one of those cases where a new band freshly hits you and, because of its impact, it's hard to even acknowledge that a later album of theirs might be better than the first album you heard. Come was composed of accomplished personnel: lead by Thalia Zedek (formerly of Live Skull and Uzi) and Chris Brokaw (Codeine, Pullman) out of Boston and New York, they were joined by bassist Sean O'Brien (Kilkenny Cats) and drummer Arthur Johnson on drums (Bar-B-Q Killers) from Athens, Georgia. Zedek is the one who provided the coarse, smoky voice that belts from what you can tell is a long history of earned experience. She sets the mood for the harsh, meaty sound of the guitars and the pounding angst of the rhythms. There's also a dissonance and jaggedness that pervades these songs, pushing them far beyond blues or rock. The darkly titled "Brand New Vein" is a somber song that charges easily from lows to highs. On "William," the band is relentlessly driving, all the while jerking and shoving you around while Zedek hoarsely screams. They slow it down at times, as with "Sad Eyes" or "Orbit," but even those have their energy. This original line-up lasted only for their first two albums and the sound changed significantly afterward. Since Come disbanded after 1998's *Gently, Down the Stream*, Zedek and Brokaw both have pursued solo projects, but *Eleven:Eleven* stands as a document of a band at its peak.

Mix It up: Smog, *A River Ain't Too Much to Love*; Max Richter, *The Blue Notebooks*; the Beans, *Bassplayer*; Caria Bozulich, *The Red-Headed Stranger*; Cloud Cult, *Advice from the Happy Hippopotamus* (reviewed this issue).



Mike Barron (MB)

Shellac, *At Action Park*. The wonderful history of Steve Albini: Big Black, Rapeman, and Shellac. All three have one thing in common other than Steve Albini, and that is being loud and angry. This anger is what Albini feasts upon in Shellac, and on *At Action Park*, it shines through loud and clear. Ten songs of now-trademark yelled vocals, tinny guitar, heavy driving bass, and tight-as-Albini's-pants drumming. While for most, it is Albini who is the spectacle and magic, I find myself enthralled by drummer Todd Trainer. His rhythmic pounding puts him ahead of any complex Joe Schmo, I-can-play-faster-and-crazier-than-you drummer. If you ask me, Todd is the heart behind Shellac. When I was 14, I heard Shellac for the first time. The first song I heard was "My Black Ass," which is the first track on *At Action Park*. The name of the song itself was pretty awesome, but the actual song... I had never heard anything like it. Such anger! Pure three-piece fury wrapped inside a badass brown sleeve with the Shellac "Lomo" logo on the back and a list of song titles including "Boche's Dick," and "Il Porno Star." Stops and starts, as well as syncopation among the bass and drums, fill out this record. As I listen to it right now, I keep losing focus on writing this review, for I, out of habit, start to air drum and hum Bob Weston's bass lines. I realize I have come close to memorizing every drum fill and drum part that Todd Trainer plays—and I'm not even a drummer. I also realize what makes Shellac great: when people refer to Shellac songs, they sing Bob Weston's bass lines. When people listen to a Shellac record, they air drum Todd Trainer's parts. And when people talk about Shellac, they talk about Steve. No one could recreate their sound, and who the hell knows who their influences are. Their unique sound has made Shellac one of my favorite bands since I was 14.

These tunes be kickin': Cannibal Ox, *The Cold Vein*; The Jesus Lizard, *Head/Pure*; Lungfish, *Feral Hymns*; Pelican, *The Fire In Our Throats Will Beckon the Thaw* (reviewed this issue); Minus the Bear, *Menos El Oso* (reviewed this issue).

Accused, the — Oh Martha!, CD

The kings of splatter are back, and they brought Martha with them. The Accused have returned with their first new album in over 10 years and brother, it's a scorcher. If you aren't familiar with them, this Seattle-area band is legendary for unleashing some of the most chaotic, eerie, and influential albums in the history of thrash and crossover. Their self-labeled brand of "splattercore" stepped crossover up a notch with gore movie imagery, hectic guitar rhythms, breakneck speeds, a cackling singer, and melodies as catchy as the plague. So, after years of dormancy, they're finally back with as much energy as ever. This album harkens back to their original three albums on Combat with powerful, lightning-fast riffs and a playfully evil attitude. With songs like, "Fast Zombies Rule," "National Embalming School," and "Hooker Fortified Pork Products," don't expect any heavy-handed political discourse. You will be singing along to them, though, as well as songs like "Scream and Die" and "Crapassreality," which goes out to an Internet shit-talker. Honestly, I was a little skeptical that this release wouldn't hold up to their former greatness, but it easily stands among their incredible first three albums. As a bonus, they've even added re-done versions of the five songs on the original *Martha Splatterhead* EP. And in true Accused fashion, they've included one of their signature cover songs, this time with "Have You Ever Been Mellow?," a twisted take on Olivia Newton John's classic. If you miss that thrash-in' crossover sound or are just getting hip to it with bands like Municipal Waste or Toxic Holocaust, you need to get this and see where it all began. (NS) Condor Records, www.splatterrock.com

Anderl, Joe — Purple Hearts and the Typesetter, CD

Art doesn't need to be about heartbreak, but it helps speed the creation of it along. Records that entrench themselves in the sorrowful details of a bushwhacking that wrenches and shreds a man like old bank documents and credit card statements start early. From the first song on Joe Anderl's debut solo record, we know we're in for a break-up album or a really good faker. "Hard Times" slow burns like Elvis Costello's "Alison" or "Good Year for the Roses." Anderl, who hails from the Gem City of Dayton, Ohio, is retrospective to a fault and it makes you think he probably keeps a box of old love letters just so he can take them out and sigh at past happiness. He's a ruined man with a puppy dog yelp and tactile, real-life experience that needs only some shakers or light drums and a dry, bluesy guitar to convince you that he's been there. It's honestly embraceable, albeit mistakable for something from your past. (SM) www.bettawreckonizemedia.com

Aneuretical — When You Were a Kid, CD

This is an ironic title for a record released by three gentlemen under the age of 21, but Aneuretical are proof that the kids are growing up a lot faster these days. Already sounding like seasoned veterans schooled in the ways of angular post-punk, Aneuretical's *When You Were a Kid* would be considered an achievement even if the band were legally able to drink alcohol. "I Was Mauled by a Bear on Bear Safety Awareness Day" builds to a crescendo that ranks with the likes of Les Savy Fav, though a majority of the tracks pay homage

to the herky-jerky rhythms of *No Kill No Beep Beep*—era Q and not U. If anything gives Aneuretical an air of adolescence, it's lead singer Matt Sandstedt's youthfully nasal pipes that occasionally sound too undercooked for their own good. But, taken as a whole, *When You Were a Kid* has the potential to lead the band in all the right directions. That is, of course, if they make it past those unsavory freshman year pre-requisites. (MS)

Afternoon Records, 222 W. 25th Street Minneapolis, MN 55404 www.afternoonrecords.com

Aqpop — Beautifully Smart, CD

I am not sure what Aqpop means in Norwegian, but it should translate to "totally great pop music." *Beautifully Smart* is chock full of wonderful songs that titillate the ears. The album starts with the blissful sounds of "Have It," combining harpsichord and flute textures that sound like a cross between the Beatles and the Ren Fair. Instrumental second track "Radio 60" is a complete '60s go-go revival that could have been taken from the Austin Powers soundtrack. "Screen" also has a '60s vibe with a chattering organ that takes you on a freewheeling carousel ride to Palisades Park. The hooky guitar and dual male/female vocals of "Beautifully Smart, She's Standing There" are pure pop perfection in less than two minutes' time. "The Day" is a sweet song with jangly guitar and chiming piano topped off with the lush vocals of Jade Hasselgard. (SJ) Happy Happy Birthday to Me Records, PO Box 742, Athens, GA 30603, www.HHBTM.com

Asva — Futurists Against the Ocean, CD

Calling all doom rockers and ambient heads: *Futurists Against the Ocean* has arrived, and track one is epic as hell. In true doom and drone fashion, Asva deploy four tracks to bombard your skull that clock in at a touch over fifty minutes; not one of the four conclude before the ten-minute mark. Co-founded by former Sunn O))) member G. Stuart Dahlquist, Asva is intent on creating the type of noise rock that those credentials would suggest. Bandmate and label head Trey Spruance adds guitar, bells, and piano to an otherwise semi-standard arrangement (although one that utilizes tympanis and Hammond organ), but his role is much more limited than in any of his other projects. Like most other ambient doom acts, Asva's taste is acquired, and I wouldn't recommend them for those of you who are bored out of your minds with this genre. Give *Futurists Against the Ocean* a shot, though, if you think that what I've described is just the bee's knees. (SJM) Web of Mimicry, www.webofmimicry.com

Ballast — Sound Asleep, CD

Ballast is an instantly crucial new peace punk/hard-core band from Montreal. Their song lengths range from typically brief (1:34) to risky (4:00), but each song has several parts and could have been recorded in smaller units. The female vocalist, Nancy, sneaks in a wide range of emotions through her gruff, yet oddly accessible style. The rougher male backing vocals gel with hers perfectly, so comparisons to Antischism are inevitable. Profane Existence was lucky to notice Ballast's two previous self-released efforts, as the band gets my vote for most likely to become the Antischism of the new millennium. Song titles include "Lorena Bobbit [sic]," "Imagine," and "Resign Yourself." The lyrics owe more to the personal than to the political, but there's an undercurrent of politics throughout.

Why bitch about church and state overtly when it's so tempting to decry one's individual oppression as a North American non-moron? It's odd to listen to this on CD, but fear not: there's an LP available as well, initially pressed on limited blue vinyl. Don't let the record collectors bring you down, though—I'm certain this will be repressed for years to come. (AE)

Profane Existence, PO Box 8722, Minneapolis, MN 55408

Black Tusk – When Kingdoms Fall CD EP

Black Tusk has got RIFFS. Heavy stoner/doom riffs, hardcore-punk riffs, greasy biker-rock riffs, and so on. That's always a good thing. Unfortunately, the three tracks on this EP come across more like collections of riffs than really cohesive songs. *When Kingdoms Fall* was produced by Kylesa's Phillip Cope, and Black Tusk share some of his band's sludge-meets-hardcore style. I'm assuming Black Tusk is a fairly new band, and with time for their songwriting to match their riff-crafting, they have the potential to be great. This EP is enjoyable on its own merits, but I hope it's a look at a band with more to offer down the line. (AB)

Wrecked Signal, www.wreckedsignal.com

Bullet Union – Ruin's Domino, CD

Finally, a band gets compared to Drive Like Jehu and actually sounds like them. Too many bands get more credit than is due by sounding vaguely like Jehu. *Ruin's Domino* has that familiar feel without sounding like a complete rip off. The Froberg-esque vocals are there, along with the chimy guitar leads. There's also some mid-nineties sounding emo parts thrown in for good measure. What tracks are the best? Making that choice is a near impossible task. All the songs are keepers. There's no stinkers in the bunch. The instrumental "Robin...I'll Be Back in Five Minutes" brings to mind Sonic Youth. The transition into "Sant Feliu" couldn't have gone smoother. Superb production melds it all into a perfect sounding album. Seriously, if you're like me and dig anything that sounds Jehu-like, then you need this CD. Just knowing that bands like this exist gives me hope that humanity isn't completely doomed. (DA)

Jealous, PO Box 321, Leeds, LS6 3YT www.jealousrecords.com

Callisto – True Nature Unfolds, CD

Melodic sludge rockers Callisto owe more to Isis for their sound than they'll probably admit to, but that's certainly not a bad thing. *True Nature Unfolds* is an album full of big, heavy, mid-tempo rock beats that lay the foundation for both the euphonic melodies and the thick-assed riffs. Touches of violin and saxophone show up here and there, bringing a little more to the fold than the bevy of bands that are currently cashing in on this sound (cough Pelican cough). The vocals are fairly similar to early Isis, but with much more of a black metal tinge than anything else. What I would assume to be guest vocals pop up in a few spots, giving those in dire need of singing a respite from the über growls. If you're already a fan of this rapidly expanding genre, give Callisto a shot. *True Nature Unfolds* does get a little lengthy for my tastes, but I'll be the first to admit that it has been something of a pleasant surprise. (SJM)

Earache, 2nd Floor, 43 West 38th Street, New York, NY 10018

Cloud Cult – Advice From the Happy Hippopotamus, CD

This album is a welcome surprise... something that

is more significant than its cover art suggests. Cloud Cult is the handiwork of Craig Minowa, who operates from an organic farm in northern Minnesota. This long album is epic in its sensibility and contains a complexity reminiscent of Radiohead. Minowa exhibits clever songwriting that is atypical with its structures, reminiscent of Modest Mouse, and his voice yields an earnestness akin to Conor Oberst of Bright Eyes, although with arguably better lyrics. Minowa composes the music (and even plays most of it), including guitar, piano, and percussion, but is helped by others playing various strings, flute, bass, and providing backing, lead and duet vocals. The versatility and variability of the album is impressive. Songs flow into one another effortlessly, and it's difficult at times to determine where one song ends and another begins. It opens with a noisy romp of an instrumental and moves seamlessly into "Living on the Outside of Your Skin," which brings the chaotic elements headstrong into a poppy orchestration laced with its own noises, and the album closes with the lullaby notes of a cradle toy. "Happy Hippo" incorporates portions of Neil Young's "Hey Hey My My" amidst its techno beats, while "You Got Your Bones to Make a Beat" is a tight, bass-driven, stop-and-go rocker that includes a distorted flute. Other tracks pursue even more disparate paths: "Transistor Radio" is a wishful, beautiful song, paired with vocals singing and humming within warm strums and pickings of clear acoustic guitar and xylophone tones. "Start New" has a poppy clean guitar percolated with electronic bleeps and beeps, while "Lucky Today" is a knee-slapping porch song with banjo and fiddle backed by crunchy beats. Finally, "Rockwell" engages house-trance beats, and computer voices couple with his own in a spacey plea for a Norman Rockwell America. Other songs feature field recordings and there are also long pauses of silence to better situate the following songs. The range of styles incorporated is astounding, especially considering the skill in how it's executed and how it all coheres. Plus, the album has production that's a treat through the headphones. As an aside, the CD packaging by Winona's own label commits to the ethics displayed in his meaningful lyrics: it's as environmental as it can be, utilizing used jewel cases, recycled paper and cardboard, and artwork printed with soy ink. Overall, with *Advice...*, Minowa has created quite an accomplishment on several levels. (BA)

Earthology Records, www.earthology.net

Collapsar – S/T, CD

Doesn't the name Collapsar just sound heavy? This three-piece outfit (guitar, guitar, drums) churns out free-ranging, instrumental prog metal compositions with highly technical musicianship. And while adding the occasional clean-channel breakdown or space rock layer to keep things interesting, Collapsar still attain maximum air-riffing potential. Some of said riffs are played at such a brisk pace, however, that you'd be lucky just to keep up by pretending to play the guitar. And while something still seems to be lacking (intermittent vocals, an extra instrument here or there, and dare I say bass?), there are enough quirky rhythms and breaks in the action to not overload you with the complex, dueling guitar

going to serve it to you. It could be in the form of a three minute breakdown, it could be in the form of acoustic guitars, or it could be in the form of a wall of noise. The stunning part about Pelican is that after listening to every track they have ever recorded, I still come back wanting more. They manage to keep their songs from sounding the same, which to me seems like it would be tough in the world of instrumental-metal-post-rock-whatever-the-hell-it-really-is. Pelican is truly a band that cannot be copied. Whether listening to *The Fire in Our Throats Will Beckon the Thaw*, or seeing them live (which I highly recommend), Pelican really are original. Their originality has continued to grow, indeed, because it is clear that the quartet are not close-minded metal fans, but true, talented musicians who embrace all sorts of music, drawing influence from diverse styles and techniques. Because of this, Pelican is one of Chicago's most notorious and beloved bands, and *The Fire in Our Throats Will Beckon the Thaw*, makes it clear that they deserve it all. I honestly can see this record appealing to the metalest of metal kids, and to the hippest of hippies. Go buy this record, sit back, and enjoy. (MB)

Hydra Head Records, P.O. Box 291430, Los Angeles, CA, 90029 www.hydrahead.com



Applied Communications – Uhhh Sort Of, CD

Max Wood's (Applied Communications) *Uhhh Sort Of* is just as ridiculously frenetic as his last release, *Africa Baby*, Yeah Yeah Yeah. However, where *Africa Baby* basked in clever absurdity and dance-dominated, geek-out tracks, *Uhhh Sort Of* has a much more agitated, frustrated tone. Even though Wood does dish out the electronics, over-the-top drumbeats, and self-deprecating subject matter heavily, it's not so much in good fun here. There is an alienation and pain that is very evident throughout the entire album. Most all of Wood's songs deal with the death of his mother... the tragedy behind his musical shift. The electronics are, for the most part, chaotic and unsettling, and Wood is predominantly either talking out his lyrics or shrieking them. The tongue-in-cheek rap-singing style he used on *Africa Baby* is less apparent on *Uhhh Sort Of*, and he's more volatile in his delivery (or completely lost in the conversational tracks), talking over talking, but never delivering anything coherent. But Wood, despite the weightiness and openness of this album, doesn't lose his sense of humor. On "It Bothers Me It Bothers You," he shrieks that everything is awesome, and while the nervous breakdown itself isn't funny, the delivery is. While his songs can be comfortably upbeat, they often feel anxious and tense. The most intense track is the final song, "Point oh Seven," which goes on for almost ten minutes with Wood repeating the survival-type mantra over and over: "I have a point. I have to live. I cannot die." It is unbelievable how willing he is to let himself completely unravel for anyone to witness. It is a desperate phrase... hopeful, though entirely filled with pain and uncertainty. *Uhhh Sort Of* is not the witty tinkering of *Africa Baby*; it is much more striking because of what Max Wood decides to give away: everything. (AJA)

Discos Mariscos, www.discosmariscos.com



Blechdom, Kevin – Eat My Heart Out, CD

The bonus 13-minute movie tacked onto *Eat My Heart Out* stars Ms. Blechdom in a dream presumably set inside a cartoon-stage treatment of her brain. After lip-synching to snippets of most of the CD's tracks, she launches into a particularly screechy avant-Casio reading of "I Will Always Love You." After a line or two, she awakes in a birch tree, where some cheap pink tape that apparently had trapped her now has dissolved. She wailed, and now she's free. Inside this MPEG apparently lies

the message of *Eat My Heart Out*, or at least the inspiration: love is messy, and it messes with you. It's not exactly the stuff that sparks revolutions, but the bizarre, IDM-off-Broadway song cycle that Blechdom devotes to explaining her relationship psychoses is unique and baffling. The electro-glitches of Blechdom's work with duo Blevin From Blechdom are evident upon squinting, but the emphasis here is on her show-womanism. Lyrically and melodically, she sets the bar at "hysterical" and goes off. "Love You From the Heart" features her spouting self-help slogans, inhaling laughing gas, and having a stroke, most likely simultaneously. "Runaway or Stay" begins as the greatest falsetto climax from any Boston or Dashboard Confessional track and builds from there. When Blechdom moans "You are my torture / and I am your chamber" amid a stadium's worth of clattering on "Torture Chamber," she actually approaches humanity. It's something that's unfortunately missing in the rest of her otherwise-diligent devotion to her ideas. Throughout the CD, it's as though her desire to build her hipster cache by exploring past pop-culture excess—in this case, Kate Bush, Laurie Anderson and the wackiest 1980s new wave—eats into her ability to be as believable. As autobiographical as her efforts might be, it's always evident she's putting on a show. Thankfully, it's B-A-N-A-N-A-S. (TS)

Chicks on Speed Records, Lindwurmstrasse 71, D-80337 München LC 10673, Germany; www.chicksonspeed-records.com

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHTS



Anthony Bartkewicz (AB)

Eyehategod - Dopesick. It always seemed appropriate that despite my coming from two different apartments and going to two different places, Dopesick lasted exactly as long as my morning commute to two different, painfully shitty jobs. Have to deal with stupid people, long hours, or low pay? Eyehategod are still worse off than you. This record is a black tar ball of negativity, and absolutely no light makes its way in. Take Black Sabbath, cut out every bit of positivity and good vibes (because really, Sabbath were just hippies using negative examples like, "this is how much it's gonna suck if you don't smile on your brother, everybody get together try to love one another right now") and replace it with heroin and vomit. That's Eyehategod. Mike Williams' vocal performance really does sound like he's throwing up for most of the album, but the general themes here can be deduced by song titles like "Lack of Almost Everything," "My Name Is God (I Hate You)" and "Anxiety Hangover." From the breaking-glass-and-screaming intro to the last shard of feedback, Dopesick remains the definitive Eyehategod statement. While you'll have to look to the earlier *Take as Needed for Pain* for "Kill Your Boss," try Dopesick on your next commute to work. You'll feel better.

If It's not Doom 3, It's: Cage, Hell's Winter; Coliseum, Goddamage; Torche, S/T; Naked Raygun, *Understand?*; Death-side, *Bet on the Possibility*.



Chris Burkhalter (CB)

Public Image Ltd. - Metal Box/Second Edition. Several years back I caught the Sex Pistols reunion tour. Though it felt ungrateful at the time, I spent the night wishing P.I.L.'s original line-up had reunited instead—which had everything to do with *Metal Box* (later re-released as *Second Edition*). The second album by John Lydon's post-Pistols group shows Lydon shaking off much of his cynical sneer and replacing it with nauseated disgust for the recording industry and for his own part in it. Lines like "Your words are useless / full of excuses / false confidences / someone has used you well" seem at least in part directed at Lydon himself. Numerous lines suggest overwhelming, self-implicating disillusionment. Consider "Only a gimmick / pointed fingers / never more serious sight," or "The likes of you and me are / an embarrassment." It's difficult not to interpret the exhausted revulsion building through the ten-minute "Albatross" as pointed at "Johnny Rotten." Perhaps more than anything, *Metal Box* is a frustrated expression at the impotence of expression, particularly in the counterculture-mining music industry. Fitting then that Lydon hardly qualifies as the album's frontman, hiding behind Jah Wobble's throbbing barricade of dub bass and Richard Dudanski's incredible disco-ready drumming. Least conspicuous, guitarist Keith Levene (ex-Clash, ex-Flowers of Romance) brought a prog-infused sensibility that prioritized conjuring new sounds over writing songs. Counting on Lydon to become a Bowie for the '80s, Virgin not only didn't toss this willfully anti-rock, obscurity-bound album into the furnace, they let P.I.L. issue it as a 45 RPM triple album, sold in custom tin film canisters. One of the most inspired documents in post-punk history, this album sounds like nothing recorded before or since by anyone. Indeed, Lydon's disenchantment proved well founded: the band disintegrated bitterly, and no one involved ever produced work of this quality again.

Sitting on top of my stereo: Blonde Redhead, *La Mi Vita Violenta*; Excepter, *Throne*; Chantal Goya, *Masculin Feminin*; New Order, *Movement*; Vibracathedral Orchestra, *My Gates Open*, *Tremble By My Side*.



Jay Castaldi (JC)

Scared of Chaka - S/T/EP. Now that I've been reviewing records for *Punk Planet* for two years, I've detected a trend in the records I choose for my spotlight review. I've always picked records that mean a lot to me personally, and usually they're by bands that I feel have been under-appreciated. Add *Scared of Chaka* to that list. Sure, they enjoyed a modest level of success and released records on some labels with a bit of clout (such as Empty and Hopeless), but to paraphrase Marlon Brando, they could've been somebody. I've thought a lot about it, and the only reason I can think of to explain why *Scared of Chaka* were never huge is that people are stupid. The punk masses couldn't deal with them because they were impossible to pigeonhole; they combined the primitive abandon of garage rock with the unashamed catchy melodies of pop-punk, and they played it all like a noise rock band. *Scared of Chaka* were the ultimate rock-paper-scissors draw—too poppy for garage rock fans, too garagey for noise rock fans, and too noisy for pop punk fans. Therefore, they slipped through the cracks that separate the fragments of "the scene." Those open-minded enough to see past the labels know that *Scared of Chaka* had "it." Their self-titled 12" EP on 702 records is probably my favorite of their releases, a brief and powerful showcase of all that they did best.

Top 5 (not counting R. Kelly's "Trapped in the Closet" chapters 1-5): Busy Signals, *Live*; Coq Roq, all four MP3s from their website; Headache City, *Shut It Off*; MC Chris, *Eating's Not Cheating*; The Marked Men, *S/T*; "On Shit Sandwich



Vincent Chung (VC)

Dillinger Four, *Midwestern Songs of the Americas*. Once, during a show at the Fireside Bowl, Paddy talked about how the kids today don't care about Billingsgate anymore. Then he went on to describe Snapcase as a band that "played all the mod hits." To be honest, I never gave Dillinger Four much of a chance because they were ex-Billingsgate. Although the ex-Impetus Inter tag was definitely alluring, I was too busy wooing girls (poorly) and breaking my edge (with triumphant results) to care at the time. Years later, and within two days of transitioning from a Southern dirtbag to an unemployed Midwesterner, something clicked when I pulled their debut album from the vaults. It was the most vivid, profound, 3 a.m. drunken solitude epiphany I've ever experienced in my life. Dillinger Four, to me, was no longer a decent pop punk band with funny titles—they became my new favorite band. *Midwestern Songs* sounded like it came from a cannon powdered with John Belushi's ashes, soaked in Old Style, and sprinkled with Jeff Pezzatti's dandruff. While it falls within the typically narrow minded pop-punk genre, it's apparent they don't shut themselves in punk's microcosm. The album's content is a brilliant blend of intelligent social critique, biting humor, and seasoned sensibility. It's obvious that D4 plays punk for the punks and by the punks, but who's counting? They aren't. As long as the alcohol flows, they'll keep churning out the hits.

Whoa, I just climaxed five times. Look at this mess: Calvary covering Void's "Time to Die,"; Assault, 2nd LP; The Observers, *So What's Left No*; Nola demos; The Horrors, *Vent*.

work. Beautiful melodies abound, but sometimes all you can do while listening to this is to sit back and say "Jesus." Comparisons for musical brethren would probably lead you to the Fucking Champs, the Cancer Conspiracy, or possibly even Oxes, but Collapsar's end product is definitely one of a unique sound. This album is really good. Highly recommended for anyone into heavy, instrumental music. (SJM)

Escape Artist Records, P.O. Box 472, Downingtown, PA 19335, www.escapeartistrecords.com

Coughs - *Fright Makes Right*, CD

Amazing. Really, nothing else needs to be said. But, I'll continue on and gush my undying love for this album. In my eyes, *Fright Makes Right* is one of the top albums of the year. The skill in which they meld noise with actual songs is unparalleled in the noise scene. The title track brings back memories of Chicago favorites Big Black. "Come Back to Me," with its banjo twang, reminds me of something off of an early Beck record. Every song has undeniable hooks without sounding forced. My only criticisms would be that the album could have been a song or two shorter, and the tracks might have worked better in a different order. In the present order, it seems like the songs get less weird as the album goes on. The Coughs' amazingness doesn't stop with this album. The small handful of times that I've seen them live have been some of the most intense spectacles I've ever seen. If you have any interest in noise music, you need to hear this album now! Jon Ziemba, I love you. (DA)

Load, P.O. Box 35, Providence, RI 02901 www.loadrecords.com

Crimson Sweet - *Eat the Night*, CD

OK, I was a fan of the last record, *Living in Strut*, when it was a solid rock band with a kind of sexy raspy lead female vocalist mixed with some smoother vocals to add depth. The music has a better recording and musicianship this time around. This shit kicks like '70s rock with elements of the Replacements. However, Polly, our vocalist, tends to sound a bit like Lemmy on the first bunch of tracks. Later on, she eases back to a better rasp, but it's no way to start an album. So, I'm torn here. It's a solid rock record with only good vocals for half the record. However, if you like your ladies with almost-blown vocal chords, this may be the stuff you're looking for. (DM)

Shake IT, 4156 Hamilton Ave Cincinnati, OH 45223

Cursive - *The Difference Between Houses And Homes*, CD

Although Cursive have finally started working on another album, it's nevertheless been more than two years since their previous full-length came out. This, a collection of old and unreleased material, will serve as a snack until the new hotness arrives. Usually, there are good reasons why unreleased songs were unreleased, and the two on here mostly reinforce that notion. Another notion reinforced: Cursive really didn't hit their stride until 2000 with *Domestica*. The music that comprises band's early material, represented on here bountifully, is mostly unremarkable mid-'90s emo (check "Pivotal"). Occasionally, there are bright moments: "Sucker & Dry" has a nice chorus, for instance. But the band's most recent material blows all of this away. It's interesting to hear Cursive's

progression over the years, but it doesn't necessarily warrant—or even invite—repeated listens. (KR)

Saddle Creek, P.O. Box 8554, Omaha, NE 68108-0554

De Novo Dahl - *Cats & Kittens*, 2XCD

Every few months, the six o'clock news reports on a house condemned by authorities because dozens of cats have conquered it. The resident cannot keep the house in sanitary condition, and the cats cannot stop reproducing. *Cats & Kittens* is like the unrestrained recorded equivalent of such a house filled with many different feline breeds. The 32 track double disc set begins with the Cats disc and ends with Kittens, which comprises renamed remixes — offspring, in a way — of each Cats song in a new sequence. This release overwhelms; however, the album gives enough to listeners to steer it clear of unforgivable indulgence. Taking a cue from David Bowie, De Novo Dahl switches genres as frequently as a child playing with the radio dial. The band creates hybrids of '60s pop and rock, sexy electro-pop, '80s white-boy R&B, new wave, and the Beatles' wackier moments. A lite-funk song morphs into a nod to "Good Vibrations." "Conquest at Midnight," a flirty dialogue between a girl and boy, calls to mind a Grease number or Elton John and Kiki Dee's "Don't Go Breaking My Heart." The remix, "Little Conquest on the Prairie," would sound like the Human League's "Don't You Want Me" if the Human League unplugged. Think of *Cats & Kittens* as the style-shifting *White Album* with a remix LP. Like the Beatles' *White Album*, there are week spots, of course. De Novo Dahl's voicemail-sampling album closer "Absentee Ballad" could be the "Revolution 9" of this set. By converting "End of Time" to a mostly a cappella version, the "José, Do You Love Me?" remix drags and slows the momentum. In the end, *Cats & Kittens* is too long. The Kittens disc is impressive but less essential than Cats. Absorbing 16 songs and then 16 remixes is a lot to ask of a listener. But De Novo Dahl's playful variety makes sure it's not quite too much to ask. (JM)

Theory 8, 1402 Ardee Drive, LaVerne, TN 37086

DJ Methodikal - *Alarmingly Lo-Fi*, CD

Alarmingly Lo-Fi, besides not necessarily sounding as such, is a concoction of noisy, whirring, drum and bass / IDM. It's a little much to handle at times, what with the same theme throughout much of album, but honestly, this is my kind of electronic music. Constantly changing, DJ Methodikal (do we really need the "k," though?) has managed to constantly keep my interest while rocking some big-assed beats, and that's more than I can say for the vast majority of this genre. The way most tracks run together, it's hard to tell that the next song has begun, but I imagine that that's the way Mr. DJ likes it. The song titles are fairly entertaining, too. For evidence, see: "I Gotta Finish My Letter to Jodie Foster." My main hope is that he starts getting the publicity he deserves after outshining many of the luminaries that the electronic scene holds near and dear. That, and a name change... that's what I hope for. Off the chizzain, as they say. (SJM)

Wordclock, P.O. Box 3266, Merrifield, VA 22066, www.wordclock.com

Deerhoof - *Green Cosmos*, CD

These seven songs were only supposed to be released in Japan as part of a split EP. Man, am I glad they

changed their mind. This is totally awesome. With each release, Deerhoof gets more and more interesting and diverse. *Milkman* is still my favorite, but *Green Cosmos* is a close second. Using more keyboards, organs, and drum programming, Deerhoof continues to grow, with two songs that stand out among the seven: "Green Cosmos" and "Spiral Golden Town." "Green Cosmos" has this ass-shaking drum loop and a keyboard part that sounds directly out of your mom's music box. The fourth song, "Spiral Golden Town" begins with a Latin horn line, and continues with playful vocals and guitar. "Koneko Kitten" ends with the lyrics, "Koneko . . . meow, meow, meow, meow, meow, meow." Genius. I doubt any band has more fun writing songs than Deerhoof. Their odd combination of tight-messiness will blow your mind if you're unfamiliar with the band. If that is the case, *Milkman* seems like a better way to start your Deerhoof collection and/or obsession. On the other hand, if you are a Deerhoof fan, this record is a necessity. (MB)

Menlo Park, P.O. Box 1652, Cooper Station, New York, NY 10276

Earthless – Sonic Prayer, CD

Psychedelic, stoner/jam-band power trio channels the spirit of Jimi Hendrix for spacey, high energy, freakout instrumentals. These dudes are certainly proficient on their instruments, and they interact well with one another as a unit. They have that essential ebb and flow, riffing off each other's ideas to take their twenty minute jams to that higher level of climactic stoner goodness. Now, to the aesthetic sensibilities of some listeners, the two tracks (clocking in at a collective forty minutes) that make up *Sonic Prayer* are going to seem like self-indulgent, meandering, drugged out hippie drones. This sure doesn't pack the concise sonic punch of hardcore or punk rock, but that's not what this particular group is going for. Earthless doesn't really play songs so much as jam out. So, if you're looking for a more focused musical statement, look elsewhere. If you want to hear some tight players get out there and do their thang, pick this up. (AJ)

Gravity, P.O. Box 81332, San Diego, CA 92138, www.gravityrec.com

El Toro – May and Marielle, CD

El Toro is perhaps what you might find a newly-single middle-schooler listening to on repeat in the after-math. The group focuses on heartfelt creations on a smaller scale. Lyrics about paper dolls and flowers abound as the band muses on life, sex, and relationships. Not too surprisingly, this causes most of the narratives within these songs to revolve around a "she," "her," or "you." In addition to this, on a handful of tracks, the strumming of an acoustic guitar and/or sequenced drums and squelches in the background, upping the cheese factor a bit. The band hits on some nice melodies and unique song constructions, though as is typical with the case of admittedly "confessional" lyrics, they end up sounding a bit trite in the end. El Toro hits its musical and lyrical stride on "The Siren," which boasts a catchy guitar lick and displays lead singer Matt Ludwowski's vocal competence at its height. (SBM)

Undecided Records, www.undecidedrecords.com

Eyehategod – Preaching the End Time Message, CD

Yes, yes, yes, yes. Speculation as to whether or not this band would (or could) ever get their shit together

again has finally been answered. New Orleans' most notorious drug-fueled band have finally returned, albeit with a stopgap of a release courtesy of the increasingly exciting Emetic Records. Like I said, this isn't a new full-length, but a bunch of alternate versions and whatnot. Here's a breakdown: tracks one and two are alternate versions of their songs from the *Cry Now, Cry Later Volume One* compilation and the *Gummo* soundtrack. Tracks three, four, and five are from split seven-inches with Anal Cunt, Soilent Green, and Cripple Bastards, respectively. Tracks six and seven are live cuts, and the real excitement starts with the last three songs, which are demo versions of songs set to appear on a NEW FUCKING EYEHATEGOD ALBUM! If you like your metal sludgy, groove-filled, drug-induced, and fucking angry, look no further. Old fans should celebrate this release, but new fans should start elsewhere . . . I recommend Dopesick. (DH)

Emetic, PO Box 1209, Flint, MI 48501, www.emeticrecords.com

Fair, Jad & David – Six Dozen Cookies, CD

Jad Fair takes the lead in the artist's names, but it's actually his brother David Fair that should. He is the primary driver behind this work, though Jad had taken the lead in their former post-punk band, Half Japanese. This is arguably an audio book—a collection of stories about their Grandpa and quirks and oddities of classic post-war Americana. The charming stories are drawn from his unpublished novel and wouldn't be out of place on *This American Life*. There are stories about card games, buying shoes with Grandpa, suburban superstitions, and baking cookies. But they are not just read, as Jad Fair conducts a soundtrack for the stories with various musicians on guitar, organ, piano, and strings. These brothers also provide appropriate or comical sound effects to illustrate each story: a door shutting, a train's whistle, a young girl giggling, and so on. It's an intermeshing of music and pure fiction that reaches new territory—the music isn't just background noise, as a song will often continue beyond the story so you can ride out the riff while at the same time providing a good break each one. (BA)

Essay Records, www.essayrecords.com

Fake Fictions, the – Experimental Cheerleading, CDEP

This lo-fi garage-pop trio from Chicago stirred up more than a little nostalgia for the K Records and Kill Rock Stars seven-inches that brought me such happiness in the mid-'90s. No mere knockoff, *Experimental Cheerleading* could probably hold its own beside releases back then and sounds plenty good in the here and now, too. Jangly guitars, minimalist drumming, boy/girl harmonizing, some keyboards, and a little tasteful tambourine contribute to a summery pop sound that verges on the precious, but won me over because, well, the songs are just really good. Unpretentious and thoroughly listenable, it sounds like the Fake Fictions had fun recording these songs. More important, it's fun to listen to. The opening track, "Lasso the Moon," is the strongest of the five here, and thoroughly embedded itself in my brain (you can hear it on their website). At times, the song is simultaneously morose and sing-songy, but catchy from start to finish. The remaining four songs should further please anyone impressed by that one. (CB)

Fake Recording Co, 2133 W. Crystal St #1, Chicago, IL 60622



Closet Monster – We Rebuilt This City, CD

Whenever I feel punk rock is done, has lost its edge, and everything has been done before, it gets reinvented in some manner or another. Mind you, Closet Monster isn't doing anything that hasn't done before, but it's their presentation that will get your attention. The dual vocal thing with catchy guitars and pounding drums are done up in a way that is heavy as hell, like a new school hardcore band, but elements of poppiness (not pop) are mixed in. If there was a party record of hardcore punk, this would be it. Sure, the message is serious about the US bombing the Middle East, or touring, or showing one's disappointment in the lack of individuality, but the presentation is such a good time. I don't have any intentions of selling these guys short by saying they are catchy; I find that their technique shows both depth and the ability to write a great song. To prove this fact, Closet Monster has an acoustic track ("The Empire Strikes Iraq") that's not only a huge sing-a-long but also has both the depth and aggressiveness that could cut you with their tongues while at the same time pulling at your heartstrings. They rest of the EP is aggressive, upbeat, and has some frantic guitar parts and great grooves that hit the listener pretty hard. Instead of breakdowns, they have chorus interludes where the bass is sliding all around with one or both vocalists screaming to get your attention. This is such a fresh take on punk that I am almost at a loss for words. I haven't felt this way about punk rock since I heard Grade's *Under the Radar* or the first Kid Dynamite record. The energy is incredible and I have honestly listened to this 8 times in a row. Seven songs don't last very long when they're this damn good. In the words of Keith Morris of Black Flag, "Gimmie, Gimmie, Gimmie. I need some more." I really need to hear more of these guys soon. (DM)

Underground Operations, PO Box 13 Ajax, Ontario L1S 3C2 www.undergroundoperations.com



Darkbuster – A Weakness for Spirits, CD

One of the bigger misconceptions of punks who look down on oi and streetpunk is that the listeners are humorless tough guys. As a square obsessed with these genres, I can personally attest that oi and streetpunk aficionados frequently laugh at the music they listen to. Nearly all of the bands are, at least on the surface, dead serious when they sing of pride, unity, and the like, but there aren't enough grains of salt on the planet to ease the ridiculous nature of much of the content. That's where Darkbuster comes in. They're not an all-out oi parody band like Hard Skin or Oil!, but instead play oi-influenced melodic streetpunk like they were given a homework assignment to be as goofy as the Dead Milkmen. The end result is *much* better than most of the music coming out today, as it picks from the best of prized thug punk genres, while adding in adolescent humor usually reserved for other types of punk. Besides one really bad ska song, everything else on *A Weakness for Spirits* is first-rate. The album kicks off with a hilarious, repetitious theme song, "We Are Darkbuster," then snaps into form with a warmongering anthem, grotesquely entitled "Stand and Deliver." Other high points include "Skinhead," about the endearing qualities of skin culture and "Grandma was a Nazi," in which the word "Nazi" is rhymed with "Yahtzee." The band hails from the Boston area, so this album features cameos from Dicky Barrett of the Mighty Mighty Bosstones and Ken Casey of the Dropkick Murphys. Darkbuster's drummer is the younger brother of the O'Halloran twins from the Dogmatics, but Darkbuster doesn't need to hype themselves with the successes of others. *A Weakness for Spirits* kicks ass aplenty, and it does so on its own. It's a fine line to walk for a band when they write so many intentionally funny songs, as pure joke bands can't typically sustain their jokes after a short while, but Darkbuster strikes the perfect balance between straight and humorous, making this album a gem. (AE)

Dumb Trumpeter, www.darkbuster.net



Discordance Axis – Our Last Days, CD

Two bands featuring Dave Witte on drums in the same issue?! Fuck, yeah. If you're a fan of grindcore (or any sort of over-the-top music), you probably know about this band. If not, let's just say that 1) They've broken up, which is sad. 2) They were one of the most insane grind bands you'll ever hear. *Our Last Days* is the last in a series of Discordance Axis releases by Hyrda Head Records. The first few being re-issues of their difficult to find first two albums, this one is a collection of mostly previously unreleased material,

also hard to come by. The first two tracks are the only "actual" Discordance Axis songs on the record, their cover of the theme to "Sega Bass Fishing" and "Ikaruga," which might have been on something else, but is for sure on the band's DVD as a crazy, crazy music video. The rest of the disc is for die-hards, as it gathers other bands' traditional versions of Discordance Axis songs, including Mortalized and Gate. Also featured on the "covers" portion of the record is Cide Projekt, who transform 10 of the band's songs, replacing the guitar with some sort of keyboard and the drums with a drum machine, excluding the vocals altogether. The results are Nintendo theme-like in sound, and kind of interesting. Hardcore wackos Melt Banana do an interesting version of "Uterior," and noise master Merzbow checks in with a remix of every song on Discordance Axis' swan song *The Inalienable Dreamless*. Finally, a major selling point is the selling point is

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHTS



Art Ettinger (AE)

Action Patrol, *Up and Running*. Today, the average person into any type of punk or hardcore cringes at the word "emo." But the early emo movement influenced legions of excellent bands. Hardcore enthusiasts embraced the likes of Heroin, Antioch Arrow, and the Fisticuffs Bluff, while simultaneously tolerating the developing boom of pop punk. Richmond's Action Patrol stands out as the ideal sign-of-the-times band of the brief emo-induced early '90s era. Recorded in March of 1994, this 7" EP on Buddy System Records features four blistering tracks, sounding like a more refined version of Avail. One of the amazing tracks, "Proud Commander Asshole," is a straight emo-hardcore song, while the other three are catchier numbers that are still firmly rooted in the late '80s / early '90s emo sound. Just as they excelled musically, Action Patrol was also a cut above lyrically, as when they spoke of smashing televisions with the lyric "I've got a cudgel to crack your cardboard cone." They followed *Up and Running* with a full-length called *The Weak Force* on Whirled Records in 1995, and ended their short career in 1996 with the 7" EP 'B' is for Bombard, released on Assorted Porkchops. The two seven-inches, the LP, and a recording of their final show are compiled on the CD collection 1993-1996: *On Patrol*. Even vinyl hounds need the CD, as the live recording is nearly as perfect as the records. Although Action Patrol broke up less than a decade ago, they're already sinking into punk obscurity. Note to punk self: don't pass up *Up and Running* if you see it in a vinyl bin.

Fall kicked in with these records: The Templars, *Outremer*; Max Levine Ensemble / Operation: Cliff Clavin, *Split*; Against Me!, *Searching for a Former Clarity*; Kill the Hippies, *Erectoscopic*; Toys That Kill, *Don't Take My Clone*.



Tara Goe (TG)

Os Mutantes, *S/T*. You wouldn't know it by checking out their debut album, but the Os Mutantes pissed off quite a few listeners in their home city of São Paulo, Brazil. Originally starting the band as a reaction against the stagnating and protective Brazilian cultural values of the time, Os Mutantes sought to bend, if not break, just about every rule they came across. Their spazzed-out experimentation on this album, and mixing of every genre they could get their ears on—psychedelia, pop, blues, traditional Brazilian folk music, and rock—now seems the norm, but back in 1967 their music was seen as a threat to Brazilian culture, and they were reportedly booed and accosted off more stages than just about any punk band from today. The groups' founding members, brothers Arnaldo Baptista (bass, keyboards and vocals), Sérgio Dias (guitars and vocals), and lead singer Rita Lee probably could not have cared less about their listeners' hostility. They were obviously having way too much fun busting out the party shoes, cranking up the distortion, building their own equipment, or using an aerosol bugspray can as the main instrument on "Le Premier Bonheur du Jour" to pay any mind. The album is so overwhelmingly fun—like having pure endorphins squeezed through your eardrums—it's hard to imagine anyone losing their shit over it. But as tropicalia maestro Caetano Veloso once said, "Os Mutantes are just too much." Sometimes too much can be a good thing.

Gimme Five: Spoon, *Gimme Fiction*; Camera Obscura, *Biggest Bluest Hi-Fi*; Mary Timony, *Ex Hex*; Black Mountain, *S/T*; Jimmy Cliff, *The Harder They Come Soundtrack*.



Eric Grubbs (EG)

Errortype:11, *Amplified to Rock*. Errortype:11 were only around for a few years in the late '90s/early '00s, but their second record is still a pearl. I discovered this band purely by a mix-up of names: I thought they were Isotope 217. When I saw Errortype:11's *Crank EP* in my college radio station's "crap" box, I picked it up thinking I would hear some wild electronica. Well, I was pleasantly surprised by this rockin' kind of hardcore. *Amplified to Rock* showed up at the station a few months later and I was even more impressed. The band delivered on the title track by avoiding rock and hardcore boundaries. Yes, those are acoustic guitars, effects-laden guitar solos and gang handclaps that you're hearing. At only nine songs, most onlookers could cry about sense of being short-changed, but when all nine songs slay, would you really want a couple extra songs that don't? Vocalist and guitarist Arthur Shepherd's strained voice perfectly fits in with the music: it's not very abrasive nor is it very clear. John Agnello's pristine sound quality gets high regards too: it's glossier than the average hardcore record, but it's not glossy by major label standards. *Amplified to Rock* would be Errortype:11's final album before the band essentially morphed into Instruction (who released their debut, *God Doesn't Care*, in 2004), a cockier and angrier version of their former selves that is, unfortunately, less than desirable.

Five relatively new albums that rock my world: Stars, *Set Yourself on Fire*; Troubled Hubble, *Making Beds in a Burning House*; Koufax, *Hard Times are in Fashion*; Bob Mould, *Body of Song*; Fountains of Wayne, *Out-of-State Plates*.



Emily Hausman (EH)

Sleep, *Jerusalem*. Let me tell you first off why Sleep's *Jerusalem* is so endearing to me. Picture this: five kids on tour in the middle of Pennsylvania. We are tired, weary and cooped up in a minivan... did I mention there wasn't a trailer? There are moments on tour when you are down, not just because you miss home or had a bad show, just the basic fact that you're run down. This is the point we all were at when we were driving through Pennsylvania during dusk. Someone decided to put in *Jerusalem* and that was the exact moment all of our spirits were lifted. The music was good, heavy sludgy rock. The kind we all listened to, but the magic wasn't necessarily in the music, it was in the lyrics. T-Top, the drummer of the band (and one of the funniest dudes I know), started reading the lyrics in an extremely animated fashion, to say the least. We were almost peeing in pants when he was reading the lyrics about the mystical land of the Weedians. And for this moment, I will always hold this record dear to my heart. Did I mention that the record is one song and 52 minutes long? I have heard that it was a ploy to get dropped by their record label, but I am unsure of the validity of that. Either way, this is one amazing record that will make you want to smoke something, swing your long ass dirty hair, and drink some sort of cheap beer. Check it out, but this record is not for the weak of heart. It is reserved for the badasses only. And like it says in the song, "Follow the Smoke into the riff filled land."

Hot bitches and some cool dudes: Chinese Stars, *A Rare Sensation*; Reggie and the Full Effect, *Songs Not To Get Married To*; Peaches, *Teaches of Peaches*; MIA, *Arular*; Avenue D, *Bootleg*.

Feathers, the – Absolute Noon, CDEP

Many bands strive for the Tortoise feel and fail miserably, falling into that overdone genre that I once was a part of. The Feathers, though, pull it off well. In fact, John McEntire, of Tortoise fame, makes an appearance on this record. Featuring a whole barrage of instruments, as well as guest musicians including Fred Lonberg-Holm on cello and Jed Bishop of Vandermark Five on trombone, this record clocks in at around 15 minutes. Packed densely with jazzy grooves and moody textures (not to mention the rather impressive artwork and packaging) and the expert engineering and mixing of John McEntire and Mike Jorgensen (especially evident on "Coral Fingers" and "The Rise"), I have to admit I'm a sucker for anything with vibes or marimba, so right away I dug this record. Smooth, and it goes down easy. The electric piano and synth sounds would have put smiles on my ears if that was physically possible. Nonetheless, I can't help but wonder if this is too much like Tortoise. I suppose if you're one of those people who runs around comparing certain bands to other bands, the Feathers are not for you. Otherwise, check this out. (MB)

Hometales, P.O. Box 331547, Miami, FL, 33133

Gripp, Parry – For Those About to Shop, We Salute You, CD

So the story goes... Nerf Herder's Parry Gripp was asked by an advertising company to write a few jingles to be used for a commercial about waffles aimed at children. No, I'm serious. Included in the liner notes is the call sheet sent by the advertising company to recruit songwriters. There is proof that they suggest using such keywords as "dip," "dunk," "livin' large," and "outrageous." Quite fittingly, Parry Gripp takes their cues, creating hilarious 30-second jingles on everything from food to sports to beer. Not only are the songs themselves funny, but Gripp wrote a prologue of sorts for each of the 51 songs on *For Those About To Shop*. Reading the liner notes is as entertaining as the music... as are song titles like "One Donut a Day," "You're My One, You're My Only, You're My Beer," and "Golf is Groovy." Gripp mocks the ridiculousness of consumerism, and while the songs themselves range from pop punk to country to bad Euro-pop, they're all over the top and very funny. (AJA)

Oglio, PO Box 404, Redondo Beach, CA 90277, www.coolcds.com

Gruf – Hopeless, CD

Gruf's microphone acrobatics are strangely engaging in his hyper-relaxed but attention demanding tactics. His rhyme cadence plays itself out more so like guiding a one on one conversational monologue than a musical performance. The full blown lack of tension in his voice makes his trade sound almost effortless. And so it goes, some of the most stylized talents in our world make an art form out of making the difficult seem so easy. There's a lot of diversity to be found, in the beats and topic matter, within the record's 13 tracks. The variety is far from the level of absurdity; it keeps the progression of the record fresh and continuously interesting. I could do without some of the over confident cameo and hook clichés, but overall, Gruf's valium mannerisms and butter smooth tingle beats are generally kind on the ears and mind. I'd recommend this one for the

hip hop fans who look past the boasting party track scene tastes in favor of relaxing on the couch, head-nodding intellectualism. (BM)

Peanuts and Corn Records, Box 30093 – RPO Marpole, Vancouver, BC Canada V6P 6S3 www.peanutsandcorn.com

Hacke, Alexander – Sanctuary, CD

For his first solo outing, former Einstürzende Neubauten member Alexander Hacke has produced a truly global album full of diverse sounds and textures from around the earth. Hacke collaborated with musicians from all over, including David Yow (Jesus Lizard), Algis Kizys (Swans) and Vinnie Signorelli (Unsane), recording the tracks in various parts of the world. Overall, a heavy dub and trip hop vibe pervades, especially in the pulsating rhythmic interplay between the bass, drums, and percussion on tunes like "Sister," "Sonntag," and the title track. Hacke layers cut up vocal samples, flamenco guitar, weird reverb shocks, fuzzed out metal shredding, free jazz trumpets, alarm clocks, and Gypsy melodies over these rhythm tracks to produce cuts that range from mildly entertaining, artsy background noise to avant-garde dance floor rave-ups. So, in other words, the album's hit or miss. It's not pop friendly or easily accessible by any means, but it also isn't nearly as far out as some of Einstürzende Neubauten's work. I still have nightmares about this tripped-out video of theirs that my cousin showed me when I was like 13. (AJ)

Koolarow, 740A-14th Street #415, San Francisco, CA 94114

Kash – Open, CD

Although the four men that make up Kash hail from Italy, this is music that sounds like it could've been made in the basement of an apartment full of post-modern Brooklynites as lead Stefano Abba belts out lines such as "I'm satisfy / I'm guaranteed" repeatedly on the opener, "Toys." Kash takes no-wave density and couples it with sparse textural moments, in addition to attempting seemingly improvised, Ornette Coleman-inspired free-wave with saxophones and trumpets that occasionally rise above the noise. Basically, Kash takes everything you would expect from a typical listening experience, flips it upside down and backwards, and then shoves it right back in your ear. "37 Telephones on Fire" is an accessible standout, as Abba's falsetto infrequently wails out the line "Burning with the fire in the telephone," as the band backs him up with sharp, smart guitars, synth keyboards and a drumbeat that is entirely danceable. However, keep in mind that such elements tend to be the exception and not the norm here. *Open* is definitely one of a kind and pushes a variety of musical boundaries, though it would take a special ear to listen the whole way through in one sitting. One spicy meatball indeed. (SBM)

Sick Room Records, Ltd., no information included; www.kash.it

Kung Fu Monkeys, the – Coast to Coast with the Kung Fu Monkeys, 7"

These four, fun pop-punk songs with a surf influence come from the prolific Kung Fu Monkeys, now in their second decade of producing irresistible pop. Kudos to the label for not putting this out on CD, but instead offering those who buy the vinyl the option of additionally getting a CD-R thrown into

the package. Now that's an interesting message to send to those enamored with digital music: you're getting it on vinyl whether you want to or not! Momentarily, there's going to be a group of kids with large stacks of CDs and only one record. Eventually they'll have to get a turntable to save themselves from the shame of being a poseur that purchased this Kung Fu Monkeys 7" without a means to play it. This vinyl-addicting tactic is as brilliant as the record itself, which pounds with youthful energy, as critical subjects like summer vacation, candy shops, and surfing in Chapel Hill are tackled with glee. The Kung Fu Monkeys are capable of putting even the grumpiest of grumps in a good mood, and I thank them for staying true to form. (AE)

Swimmingly Records, www.geocities.com/swimminglyrecords

Lali Puna - *I Thought I Was Over That: Rare, Remixed and B-Sides, CD*

Led by Valerie Trabeljahr, this four-piece out of Munich, Germany, has released a compilation of assorted material after three albums of electronica-based indie pop. It's all over the place with nineteen tracks of covers, remixes, and other odds and ends. But, if you are a Lali Puna completist, don't think you can skip out on this one, because they added two original pieces, the static-encrusted opening instrumental, and the melancholy yet catchy single, "Past Machine," written for the late John Peel. Nearly half of the tracks are remixes, including several by notables of electronica, including Alias, Sixtoo, and others. One of the better ones is the "To Rococco Rot" remix, where the bleeps, snaps, and other patterns are mentally tickling, with Trabeljahr's voice soft and soothing within the pillow cloud ride. In the end, like a lot of compilations, its variety precludes cohesiveness and doesn't ensure an even level of quality control especially when endured at such length. But, like a roadside flea market, anyone can find some treasures within it. (BA)

Morr Music, P.O. Box 550141, 10371 Berlin, Germany
www.morrmusic.com

Mae-Shi - *Heartbeeps, CD*

I like to imagine that this album is the sound of the Mae Shi having a full-on, fifteen minute, communal heart attack. Little electronic beep-beeps filter between songs, before the guitar eventually jumps in to mimic the sound of a heart beating, or maybe just totally freaking out. Things pump along at breakneck speed for the first (very short) five songs, before slowing down and walking it off for less than a minute on "Spoils of Injury." Then, they're right back to running the five-minute-mile. This album is much more focused than their debut and actually features four songs over two minutes (!), but I'd still like to hear a three-minute pop song from these guys. Still, this album totally works for me, and is almost less a collection of songs than one really long piece of spazzed-out punk-electronic filth. At fifteen minutes, it's actually short enough to be one song but good enough to be any other band's entire catalog. (TG)

5 Rue Christine, PO Box 1190, Olympia, WA 98507, www.Src.com

Man In Gray / the Unsacred Hearts - *Split 7"*

Man In Gray play fuzzed-out post-punk with occasional funky parts giving way to straightforward thrashing in the choruses. The first track has a great male and female co-lead vocal, and the two singers' voices compliment each other well. Even better are the pissed off female lead vocals on the second tune, which really pull the whole song together. There's enough good stuff in the two Man in Gray songs to make me curious to hear what they'd do with a full-length effort. I liked the last record I reviewed by the Unsacred Hearts, and I like their two songs on this EP too. They also play fuzzed-out post-punk stuff, but it's darker and more linear than Man in Gray. On the excellent "Do You Like Spy Movies?" the rhythm section locks into a tight groove while the guitarist pulls out bright, disjointed squeals. "The End is Near" is a bit more subdued, and the casual-but-confident vocal delivery reminds me of Wayne County for some reason. My only complaint: This is a split 7", yet the label sent a CD-R copy for review. I know it's cheaper to mail a CD-R than a 7", but it would be nice to review the actual release, with the full packaging, instead of a mere facsimile. But, in all honesty, I'm probably only griping 'cause I dig the songs so much that I'd like to own the actual record. (JC)

Serious Business Records, 538 Johnson Ave, Suite 205, Brooklyn, NY 11237, www.seriousbusinessrecords.com

Meneguar- *I Was Born at Night, CD*

A constant barrage of unassuming hooks and driving melodies, Meneguar is a welcome addition to the new fleet of energetic punk bands creating interesting but undeniably catchy songs. While the sound might lean towards more of an "indie" sound than you'd expect (considering the screamy pedigree of Magic Bullet), tracks like "Kids Get Cut" and "The Temp" are sure to get anyone with legs moving, regardless of what "core" they're currently repin'. The sound recalls everything from the humble pop of Digger and their Lehigh Valley peers to the more contemporary sounds that currently permeate throughout the Omaha air. However you define *I Was Born at Night*, one thing's for sure: seven tracks are not enough. (MS)

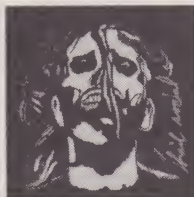
Magic Bullet, 17 Argyle Hills Drive Fredericksburg, VA 22405

Minus the Bear - *Menos el Oso, CD*

First of all, this band rocks. Few bands can creatively play emotional, poppy indie-rock without sounding like a hundred others. The guitar work in Minus the Bear is the heart of the creativity, with many melodic intricacies and rhythmic twists. Taking influence from the Police, this Seattle quintet takes it a step further by building layered, instrumental arrangements. I feel like this record is flawless, demonstrating a definite growth in the musicianship of Minus the Bear since their last record. While I have enjoyed all of Minus the Bear's releases, *Menos el Oso* is in a category of its own. It's perfect in every way—just the right amount of danciness, the perfect amount of electronic delicacy, and amazing songwriting. While previously, Minus the Bear seemed to be known for their comical song titles, they have broken out of that barrier and seem determined to now be known for their musical creativity. Produced by the band, *Menos el Oso* can also be noted for its recording quality: even their recording

the debut of vocalist Jon Chang's new band, GridLink. Featuring members of Mortalized and Melt Banana, the band is a logical extension of Discordance Axis: more crazy riffing, insane drumming, a bass player (something Discordance Axis never had), and Chang's amazing vocals over it all. Let's talk for a minute about those vocals, shall we? To end this review, I would just like to put in print that Jon Chang has the best scream in music. That is all. (DH)

Hydra Head Records, www.hydrahead.com



Hail Social - *Hail Social, CD*

You walk into the dark club. Everything is dark and quiet, aside from a few mumblers camped out at the bar. All of a sudden you hear it: thump thump thump, that steady disco punch, from a distant drum kit. The bass line kicks in, gliding over the clean beat and leading you right into the vocals: a hint of melancholy and despair hiding beneath the confidence and straightforward quality of Dayve Hawk's vocal delivery. With driving riffs, bold bass lines, and the occasional fal-

setto, this Philly quartet knows what it's doing from minute one and on—and this is only the debut! Dancehall disco riffs and steady, thumping drums appear on nearly every track to groove the record along, with the songs themselves taking an angular yet overtly and unabashedly poppy form. The lyrics take the cake, though, as Hawk takes simple phrases that drive home the isolation and paranoia running along behind the beats through his urgent yet detached vocal stylings. "Track #1" brings back the concept of having a chorus and places a spotlight on the drums, while "Feeling Is Wrong" takes a hint or two from Duran Duran as the band battles between guitar licks and bass lines while Hawk's standout falsetto reaches its apex. Yes, the overall shtick of the band is the equivalent of listening to the radio about 20 years back, when it was chock full of insular hits and nearly every song was danceable but not without an air of defeat, given that it was, well, the '80s. The band itself claims to sound akin to '80s roller skating music played by a metal band," which is more or less accurate. Regardless of what you happen to think of that particular time period or sound, *Hail Social* dwells in the better aspects of the pop song anatomy and exploits them for all they're worth through quick tracks and a foreboding punch line—all of which comes together on the outstanding final track, "No Title." You laugh at the fools still at the bar as you move up closer to the stage, take out your earplugs, nod your head and start a heavy hipster sway to this one. (SBM)

Polyvinyl Record Co., www.polyvinylrecords.com



Jessica Fletchers, the - *Less Sophistication, CD*

Less Sophistication sounds like a soundtrack to a Frankie and Annette teen beach party movie produced by George Martin at Abbey Road Studios. Which is to say the bright, concise, melodic tunes on this album would have sounded fun, fun, fun on the radio of your daddy's T-bird, circa 1966. Or, if John Lennon had lived to hear this CD by Norway's the Jessica Fletchers, he might have said, "Isn't it good? Norwegian plastic." Very good, actually, though the band will

not win any accolades for originality. Indeed, the Jessica Fletchers imitate more than they innovate. The group borrows riffs, harmonies, instrumentation, chord progressions, and messages from the Beatles and other British and American pop artists of the '60s. "How Unlucky (Can You Possibly Get?)" mimics the riff from "Drive My Car" from *Rubber Soul*. The same backing harmonies that set apart the Beatles' "You're Going to Lose That Girl" and "Help!" appear in "I Need Love." The title track features guest flute, trumpet, and Theremin players. The Zombies' "Time of the Season" inspires the breathy vocal clicks, upbeat stabs of guitar, and electric piano solo of "Get Connected." Then, the Jessica Fletchers belt out the chorus like it's a song by the Turtles. Frontman Thomas Innstø and co-producer Steve Wold impersonate *Imagine*-era John Lennon and Phil Spector with the double tracked vocals, warm, somewhat muted drum sound, and unadorned piano chords in "You." "It Happens Tonight" models its chord progression after George Harrison's "While My Guitar Gently Weeps." Hippies might as well have written "Driving Song" during the Summer of Love because the chorus goes, "Love is all around / It's all around." The full immersion in the sounds and moods of the '60s allows the Jessica Fletchers to pay tribute to the music from the period without becoming a cheesy tribute band. The list of allusions to the Beatles and their peers in each track on *Less Sophistication* is essentially the band's love letter to the groups of the '60s. And because the Jessica Fletchers innocently, sincerely, and thoroughly renew the oldies sound, the band could be mistaken for a peer of the Fab Four and others. Imitation might be the sincerest form of flattery, but this groovy sonic garb sure looks flattering on the Jessica Fletchers' figure. Record label Rainbow Quartz has released another psychedelic pop gem for all who enjoy rock 'n' roll music... except people who hate the Beatles. (JM)

Rainbow Quartz International, 440 9th Ave., 8th Floor, Suite 36, New York, NY 10001, www.rainbowquartz.com

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHTS



Dave Hofer (DH)

Fall Silent, *Superstructure*. Have you ever gone to a show, thinking that it was going to be totally packed, and then found it mostly empty? Rare, for the most part, but that's what happened to me when this now defunct Reno, Nevada, band came to Chicago about seven years ago. Based on the strength of *Superstructure* and the fact that it was summertime, I assumed that the Fireside would be packed to the gills to see these guys tear shit up. No dice. There were maybe 50 people there, but they tore shit up anyway. That one show seems to be representative of their history as a band, overall. Granted, they were probably huge in Reno, but not many people seem to know about this amazing, amazing band. The second of three full-length records, *Superstructure* is hard to describe. There's a dash of thrash, a pinch of blast beats, a breakdown here and there, and much more conscious lyrics than you normally get with what sounds like tough guy hardcore. But, that's just the thing about Fall Silent: while their music is completely punishing on the surface (possibly leading many to write them off as just another hardcore band), all of their songs are filled with hooks and incredible songwriting if you just take the time to listen. Take "Day of the Locust," for example. A two part song, a lot of it goes by with minimal lyrics but is impossible to stop listening to because the song(s) are so well put together. Also, drummer Damon Watson plays one of the most insane beats on the second part... still confusing me to this day. The lyrics mentioned above are usually fairly straightforward ("What Should I Do's" post-college confusion), and for the most part deal with everyday frustration ("Is there an idea that I can put forth / a reason or a rhyme that you haven't heard before?"), but are screamed with such earnest that you can't help but pay attention. If current day hardcore is getting you down, please seek this out. The LP is still in print on 702 Records, even.

How have you been / It's been some time / let's talk about our hair: Fall Silent, *Drunken Violence*; Freestyle Fellowship, *Temptations*; Aborted, *The Archaic Abattoir*; Rival Schools, *United by Fate*; Vince "Cenzo" Hayner, *The Nasty Adventures of Nasty McHast* and *His Nasty Nasts*.



Karl Jensen (KJ)

Sparklehorse, *Good Morning Spider*. In a musical age when so many are overly self-aware and pretentious, how refreshing it is to listen to one of the least affected artists around: Sparklehorse's Mark Linkous. He is an artist who lives what he writes, and *Good Morning Spider*, his masterpiece, will make you want to crawl inside the record, make yourself at home, and, perhaps, never leave. Though it has had a fairly consistent lineup in recent years, Sparklehorse is basically Linkous' project. The rural Virginian's songs are odes to all things nature—birds, bugs, trees, and the like—but manage to avoid sounding predictably true because their sentiments are genuine. Musically, the 17 tracks on *Good Morning Spider* are quite varied, some featuring heavy distortion ("Pig," "Chaos of the Galaxy/Happy Man"), others playfully competing drum machines, mellotrons, concertinas, strings, harmoniums, organs, vibraphones, and pianos ("Sunshine," "Hundreds of Sparrows"), and the rest, a beautiful, pin-drop quiet ("St. Mary's," "Junebug"). Close your eyes, and you'll practically smell pine and hear crickets chirping. And by the time Linkous remarks that his "bones wish to escape and run along the alien expanse / to collapse from the heat in a cartoonish heap / to sleep," you can bet you'll be aching to join him. (KJ)

I'm playing the poopers out of: Andrew Bird, *Mysterious Production of Eggs*; Andrew Bird's Bowl of Fire, *The Swimming Hour*; Sufjan Stevens, *Illinois*; The Divine Comedy, *Promenade*; David Mead, *The Luxury of Time*.



Ari Joffe (AJ)

Black Sabbath, Vol. 4. A strong case can be made for proclaiming the original lineup of Black Sabbath—Tony Iommi, Geezer Butler, Ozzy Osbourne, and Bill Ward—as the most important rock n' roll band of all time. Now, I know that's a bold, utterly subjective statement, but here is my argument: these four musicians took the tools of the pre-existing sounds of rock, blues, and jazz that they had to work with and completely reinvented the wheel. Since their debut, they've had a huge influence on a number of bands in a number of different genres, from Black Flag to the Butthole Surfers to Sleep. Sure they took a few cues from the amped-up, fuzzed out acid rock of peers like Cream, Hendrix, and Led Zepelin (all of whom came out just a year or two prior to Sabbath), but none of those artists ever produced anything that came remotely close the ominous blast of down tuned riffage that was the signature Sabbath sound. That sound was completely unique. They played like no one before them, and nothing—NOTHING—was as heavy. Just listen to Vol. 4 cuts like "Cornucopia," "Under the Sun," "Snowblind," and "Tomorrow's Dream." I've heard Sabbath fans proclaim any one of their first four (some even say six) albums as their best. To my ears, they really hit their peak on this, their fourth album, released in 1972. The first two (*Black Sabbath* and *Paranoid*) showcased a band coming out of that "three sets a night, six days a week" bar band mode, so there's a lot of long jamming out on those albums. Starting with the third album, *Master of Reality*, the riffs got even tighter, the arrangements more focused, and the lyrics way deeper. Vol. 4 stepped it all up a notch. On a personal level, this album really helped me through some tough periods in my life. Listening to the empowering music and words on Vol. 4 was literally a reason to get out of bed and keep going. Hopefully, if need be, it'll do the same for you. (AJ)

Derwood Chooch has been burning me the best mix CDs with tunes by: Bolt Thrower, Soilent Green, Possessed, Brutal Truth, and Pig Destroyer, among others.



Scott Jones (SJ)

Primus, *Tales from the Punchbowl*. I did not like Primus when I first heard them. I totally did not get the unique sound of their debut (and live) album *Suck on This*. But by the time "Jerry was a Racecar Driver" came out, it was hard to ignore the merits of the trio's tweaked out post-metal math funk freakout. I got sucked in, became a fan for life, and had my views on music permanently altered. Vocalist and bassist Les Claypool's songs are always filled with a colorful cast of cartoonish characters, and *Tales from the Punchbowl* does not disappoint, starting with the dark and twisted "Professor Nutbutter's House of Treats" which features Claypool's rumbling, smacked and whacked bass. Claypool takes us on a journey akin to the crazy boat ride from the original version of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. On "Wynona's Big Brown Beaver" we get a taste of guitarist Larry Lalonde's country fried bottleneck

is flawless! It makes me wonder whether they could recreate the sound for a live show. If you know what's good for you, then go buy this record. (MB)
Sulcidie Squeeze Records, P.O. Box 80511, Seattle, WA, 98108
www.sulcidiesqueeze.net

Mistress – In Disgust We Trust

The press sheet name checks Napalm Death and Extreme Noise Terror—two bands that helped define the sound of Earache Records—but Mistress rarely steps on the gas as hard or as regularly as those bands. Lots of *In Disgust We Trust* rides the tempo between thrash and hardcore punk, with some grooves here and there. They can do the fast stuff too; the blast-fest parts incorporate subtle, almost black metal melodies. Here's a word I don't get to use often enough: *burly*. Burly vocals, burly riffs. While the members of Mistress appear to be of varying body types, they sound like awesomely pissed-off fat dudes, like if Crowbar decided to play fast. With the exception of some ill-advised shots at clean singing, this is almost everything I could ask for in a metal record. One more time: *BURLY*. (AB)
Earache, 2nd floor, W. 38th St., New York NY 10018, www.earache.com

Monistats, the – In Let's Disinfect!, CD

As an avid reviewer, I'm always quick to cast the first stone when bands sound too similar to other more popular/talented acts. However, I must admit to some hypocrisy and nepotism when said band imitates a band I adore. Tip: Bands that sound like the Replacements should always send me their demos. Guaranteed five stars. In this case, *Let's Disinfect!*'s snotty speed punk sounds an awful like childhood favorites, Chicago's Screeching Weasel. In fact, I'd imagine this to be the kind of record that Ben Weasel would've created if he was born a decade later, and subsequently relocated to Gainesville. All of the Weasel trademarks are here: fixation on singing songs about pointless topics ("Please Don't Give Jamie Any More Beer"), every track clocking in less than 2 minutes, and a healthy musical respect for the Ramones. Things might not be what they used to, but sometimes a replacement can be just as much fun. (MS)
Pom Pom / Bony Orbit, www.bonyorbitrecords.com

Nawrocki, Norman – Duckwork, CD

Americans, be wary: Norman Nawrocki has unveiled a plan for Canada to invade the US and take over its institutions, freeze corporate accounts for socialist projects, and convert the military personnel into hockey players. That's from "A Modest Proposal," but not all of it is done in jest—much of the politics on the album is quite serious. Nawrocki's lyrics are heavily critical of the US as the world's main terrorist problem, and his style ranges from the sarcastic, perceptive, affecting, and obvious. However, he is able to work the tone of his political commentary into the tunes of his music quite well without making it come off as spoken word with musical backing. He has a child rap off a list of US history of invasions since 1890 over crunchy beats, his father's actual worried phone messages from watching CNN News play amidst steady drum clicks and the channeling of violins, and a list of reasons to become an anarchist are ranted within a growing chorus of guitars, keys, strings, and beats. It's quite eclectic and is as interesting for its message as its music. This is his first

solo album, though he has recorded before as a part of Rhythm Activism and Bakunin's Bum. Hailing from Montreal, two songs are done in French to keep in line with Canada's required bilingualism. (BA)
Les Pages Noires, P.O. Box 891, Desjardins Station, Montreal, QB, Canada, H5B 1B9, www.nothingness.org/music/rhythm

Necro – The Pre-Fix for Death CD

Dude's name is Necro; one song is titled "Death Rap." You probably know right away whether or not this is for you. On this album, rapper, producer, and label owner Necro enlisted members of old-school thrash metal bands like Voivod, Nuclear Assault, and Obituary to help create a metal/hip hop fusion on several tracks. I'll say this: it's an interesting experiment that never devolves into Limp Bizkit rap/rock territory. There's plenty of straight-up hip hop here, too. Necro's (ahem) atypical voice and flow aren't for everyone, but I can't get too mad at a record that might introduce a new generation of kids to Voivod or Nuclear Assault. I have to ask, though, why anyone would put Hatebreed's Jamey Jasta on the same album as Away and Dan Lilker. I know the answer is "to sell records," but seriously, that's like throwing Vin Diesel into an ensemble cast with Steve McQueen and Clint Eastwood. (AB)
Psycho+Logical Records, PMB # 196, 1375 Coney Island Avenue, Brooklyn NY 11230, www.psychologicalrecords.com

Need New Body – Where's Black Ben?, CD

For 10 years, Need New Body has excelled at being everything and ultimately, nothing of substance. It's goofy and spastic, bluegrassing one moment and spazzing down a rollercoaster the next. Which calls to question: when would anyone have the patience to sit through an entire album of Need New Body's non-committing? Answer: seven times. 1) When you buy your first vocoder and attempt to conduct any and all conversations through its vocal filters, well aware that its heyday is in cultural purgatory. 2) When you're an art school fuck-up, punch drunk, and cracking up during your shit. 3) When you receive your first preteen crank call and hang up wondering if the 13-year-old you would have agreed with the way you handled the situation. 4) When you find peace with 30-year-olds pretending they're 13-year-old rappers from 1982. 5) When you also find peace with the fact that track number five, "Mouthbreather," is not a mind-bending cover of a Jesus Lizard hit but some dude yelping "One, two, three, check" over random electronic gurgles. 6) When you realize that the mindfuck of track number eight, "Outerspace," not only perfectly utilizes actual members of Sun Ra's Arkestra, but also could double as the soundtrack for the climax to a blissfully awesome indie movie. 7) When you have 15 dollars and can't do any better. (TS)
5 Rue Christine, P.O. Box 1190, Olympia, WA 98507-1190; Src.com.

Not Enough Gold – The Live & Learn EP, CDEP

Melodic, catchy, firmly "Generation Y," hardcore unit out of Chicago. I might be just a few years too old to really find this stuff 100 percent vital, but it has its merits, for sure. The boys infuse your basic neo-hardcore formula—play four fast power chord, blast, scream your guts out, and then hit the breakdown—with some nice '70s punk n' roll guitar raunch. The six cuts are all really catchy, so I'm sure the high

school crowd will LOVE this stuff. It's just rebellious sounding enough to make the kiddies feel tuff, but buffed and polished enough to appeal to the more, shall we say, "tender" aesthetic sensibilities of those members of the listening public who may find the work of current killer hardcore bands like Siege of Hate or Venomous Concept too harsh. I suppose Not Enough Gold is comparable to a heavier version of Fall Out Boy, if you need that sort of reference. Actually Pete Wentz, of the aforementioned mall punk up-and-comers, makes a guest vocal appearance on one of the cuts. So maybe we should all get ready for a heavy rotation Not Enough Gold buzz clip, huh? I don't know. Something tells me these boys harbor some good old anti-corporate, "We're not gonna" sell out, maaaaannnn!!!" idealism to 'em. But, in this day and age, you never can tell. (AJ)

Hewhocrorrupts Inc., 196 Fairfield, Elmhurst, IL 60126, www.hewhocrorruptsinc.com

Odawas – The Aether Eater, CD

This record is somewhat of a tribute to literary greats of the past, such as Camus and Dante, as the anti-hero of Odawas goes on an epic journey throughout this album. A concept like this is, to say the least, ambitious. The quavering vocals of Michael Tapscott—when they appear—have a strange, almost chilling resemblance to Neil Young, as he wobbly croons beneath layers of lo-fi strumming and scuttling reverb. When the vocals aren't shaking or repeating back onto themselves, the music dissolves into a variety of soundtrack-esque instrumental soundscape marathons. *The Aether Eater* does not transcend by any means, but many of these tracks have a distance to them, which unfortunately makes them more inaccessible upon each listen. Ultimately, that distance becomes frustrating and overdone, as does the confining nature and scope of the album as a whole. If you're looking for a challenge, at least start with "Kids," which shows off the infrequent talent of Odawas at its height. Otherwise, good luck figuring it all out. (SBM)

Jagjaguar, 1499 West Second St., Bloomington, IN 47403, www.jagjaguar.com

Ox – Dust Bowl Revival, CD

Mark Browning has to have done the dead-end job thing. He must have been flung away for dead, like a still-burning cigarette butt tossed out of a moving car by a former lover, and he must have eventually gotten over that. He has to have groused about the injustices of life over 12 packs of Miller High Life and still somehow found the subtle beauties in the mess of it all to pick himself up by the boot straps and write these gorgeous folk songs about his trials. A deathly calmness affects every second of this magnificent American re-release of the album that caused a college radio sensation in Canada last year. His slow, down-home waltz—something of a twisty concoction of Michael Stipe, Mason Jennings and Ben Gibbard—through these 13 songs of intricate perfection is the audio equivalent to the autumnal turning of the trees and the onset of sweater weather. He's good for the bonfires and s'mores crowds of the rural Midwest, for those who believe in the layer below surface level, where the truth of people and the truth of sadness camps. (SM)

www.oxmusic.ws

Pace, Greg – The Pace Get Goin', CD

Though much of Greg Pace's album comes across as your run-of-the-mill emo, he does shake things up a bit with his use of slightly less run-of-the-mill (at least as far as his genre is concerned) instrumentation—namely harmonica and vibraphone. The album's war motif also helps set it apart from the scads of similar releases, and lyrics like "Your kisses don't leave me licking my lips like they ought to" will at the very least get your attention. Still, there's not quite enough uniqueness or profundity to make *The Pace Get Goin'* a truly remarkable release. What's most disappointing is that it seems Pace devoted a great deal of time and energy to being profound when making the record. While it was a valiant effort, the result is the sound of an artist simply trying too hard. I wouldn't seek the album out, but I certainly wouldn't count Greg out either. Let's see what he comes up with next time out—here's certainly determined. (KJ)

gregpace@aol.com

Parts and Labor – Great Divide b/w Take Us Back, 7"

It seems the next big pseudo-underground fad is to take old electronics that are slowly dying (Cassios, Speak-n-Says) and incorporate them into bands for that edgy, deconstructive effect. Brooklyn noise group Parts and Labor has fallen prey to that game, and in turn, has put out an impressively packaged single on Plastic Records. This format, in effect, offers a 50/50 chance of enjoying what is on this red little 45; and, not too surprisingly, that is precisely what it does. "Great Divide" sounds like a battle scene in a video game gone horribly awry, with laser gun-esque bleeps going off in the background until the vocals come in to slow it down a bit, although listening to the awkward, anemic delivery of the pipes on this track isn't the easiest thing in the world—and that isn't because they are delivered through a delay pedal. The b-side "Take Us Back," however, is a far more gratifying experience, as the strengths of Parts and Labor come through loud and clear as they pay more attention to their aesthetic than their squealing Nintendo counterparts. The guitar comes through loud and clear as bold, uplifting licks carry the track, the vocals are more controlled and in key, and while everything remains under a layer of slight distortion, it works to their favor this time around. Hopefully they will ditch the first part and continue with what they learned on the second side. (SBM)

Plastic Records, P.O. Box 1385, New York, NY 10156

Pug Uglies, The – Minimum Wage, CD

This fast Boston streetpunk band is a force to be reckoned with. I'm troubled to know that they've been around since 1997 and didn't have a full-length till now, because they're simply phenomenal. They sound like a much harder and much better version of The Briggs. It's definitely in that new, semi-melodic oi/streetpunk vein, but the songwriting and vocals push it way over the commonplace rail that most other bands of this sort are all too comfortable straddling. Songs like "Go For Broke," "Another Round," and "Street Rule," are so catchy that even in their relatively edgy and non-melodic form, they have odd commercial potential. The Unseen seem to be the only recent band besides Dropkick Murphys that overcame Boston and broke



Joan of Arc – Presents Guitar Duets, CD

This is an interesting concept. Tim Kinsella organized everyone who has played guitar at one point or another in Joan of Arc and had them record 10 tracks of pure guitar duets. But first, each person had to draw names out of a hat to decide whom they would be making a duet with. Sounds pretty cool, right? Well... sort of. Missing from the recordings is the utter peculiarity of Tim Kinsella, as he only plays guitar on two of the tracks. In its place is the weirdness of a handful of other musicians. Another miss-

ing piece of this record is song titles. Instead, on the back of the CD are drawings of the two musicians who played on each of the ten tracks, which is a pretty rad concept. While a lot of the musicians were limited to acoustic guitars, they create an eclectic blend of music, from droney middle-eastern to experimental (ala Ben Vida). Honestly, I was hoping all the tracks would be similar to the first two. The first song is a soothing duet between Bobby Burg and Nate Kinsella whose lo-fi overlapping guitars create a more straightforward folk arrangement. Song number two is a duet by Bobby Burg and Matt Clark (of Pinebender fame). A bit more ambient, this track puts electric guitars to use, building a wall of gorgeous sound under a repetitive electric guitar part. But, after these two songs, I feel like it goes sort of downhill. Some of the songs drag on without going anywhere or resolving anything. A number of them also merely sound like noodling, as if the members had waited until the night before, when they exclaimed, "Oh shit, we have to record tomorrow! Oh shit, I don't have any parts written! Oh shit, I'm too high to do that tonight!" I was expecting so much after the first two songs, and found myself only liking the last song as well. I give Joan of Arc props for the concept, and for the first two songs. And of course, the artwork rules, which is another plus. However, this record was a bit disappointing and boring. I'm sure everyone who has played guitar in Joan of Arc is talented, but they all don't belong on one CD. Stick to the normal lineup, Tim. (MB)

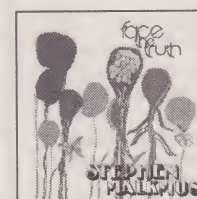
Record Label, 2438 N Maplewood, Chicago, IL 60647, bobby@recordlabelrecordlabel.com



Judge – What It Meant, CD

It's such an honor to be reviewing such an important record. This is the Judge discography. It's all here... even the Chung King recording. Judge was one of the most important of the late '80s New York hardcore bands. They formed as a Youth of Today side project... Mike Judge decided that if people were going to give them trouble for being straight-edge, then he wanted to have a band to get in their faces. Born out of confrontation, it was this attitude that would eventually lead to the end of the band. In the end the violence became too much, and Mike decided to take a step back. On the first 7", Mike Judge played drums and sang, and Porcell played guitar and bass. Seeing as both members were in Youth of Today, it's not surprising that the first Judge 7" sounds a lot like them. In a rare feat, their cover of "Warriors" by Blitz manages to beat out the original. On their full length, *Bringin' It Down*, their sound moved away from the traditional Youth of Today sounds. The songs got tougher and more metal sounding and the lyrics got better, too. Throughout the album, the lyrics seem to cover a lot of negativity, but it doesn't come off as pessimistic. It seems like Mike Judge was writing these songs as a sort of personal therapy. In that right, the lyrics feel pretty inspiring. After *Bringin' It Down* is the *There Will Be Quiet 7"*. This 7" contained the last Judge song ("Forget This Time") as well as a remake of "The Storm" and a cover of Led Zeppelin's "When the Levee Breaks." The last release on the CD is the Chung King Can Suck It album. This was the original recording of *Bringin' It Down*, but the recording didn't turn out and they ended up re-recording the whole album. Until now, this version of the album was only available as a bootleg or as a high priced collector's item (sometimes fetching over \$1,000 on Ebay). While the songs are still great, I can understand why they were unsatisfied with the recording. The drums sound really boxy and everything else sounds pretty flat. As an added bonus, they tacked on a previously unreleased demo song. Today's hardcore kids need to sit down and absorb this discography, because so many bands that they love would never have existed without Judge. (DA)

Revelation Records, PO Box 5232, Huntington Beach, CA 92615-5232 www.revelationrecords.com



Malkmus, Stephen – Face the Truth, CD

Excluding Pavement's early EP's, I believe that every record Stephen Malkmus released has been on Matador. Well, it must be a good match up because *Face the Truth* is a fantastic album that ranks among Pavement's best work. "Pencil Rot" starts out with some psych-out synths and military snare rolls leading into verses accompanied by falsetto backing vocals and a muted fuzz guitar that threatens to let loose but never quite does, leaving it up to the beguiling chorus to resolve the issue. The harmony of "It Kills" runs the gamut of happy good time emotions that ride freely into the sunset with a banjo sidekick. "I've Hardly Been" takes a more serious road via the modal acoustic guitar riff and rock out, odd time chorus as Malkmus sings, "I've hardly been / cannot get in / unlike

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slide. It sounds like a musical regurgitation caused by white suburban boys' overexposure to rednecks. Next up is the very Floyd-ian buildup of "Southbound Pachyderm." With lyrics like, "And there is no reprise / they're filling the sky / southbound pachyderm," one can only picture a horde of flying elephants migrating to wherever flying elephants go.

Wanna' know what's shakin'?: Arcade Fire, *Funeral* (still!); Stephen Malkmus, *Face the Truth*; Spoon, *Gimme Fiction*; Sonic Youth, *Daydream Nation*; the Orb, *Bicycles and Tricycles*.



Ryan Leach (RL)

The Gun Club, *Mother Juno*. A Cocteau producing a Gun Club record? It shouldn't have worked, but it did... really well. Story has it, Pete Hook of New Order was supposed to produce this Gun Club comeback album, but with some coaxing from Gun Club bassist Romi Mori, Jeffrey Lee Pierce (Gun Club figurehead) opted for Cocteau Twin Robin Guthrie. The pairing proved fruitful, as Jeffrey Lee brought some of his strongest material to the table, with Guthrie yielding just enough of his surreal vision to lightly flavor what turned out to be the Gun Club's *London Calling*. The Gun Club ended in '84 amidst a tumultuous final tour, but two years into a disillusioned solo career, Pierce struck back with a vengeance. B-Side opener "The Breaking Hands" parlays some of Jeff's best lyrics with Guthrie's idiosyncratic production (check the surreal church bells). His songwriting covers the gamut from relationships ("Hearts"), the horror of America's napalming in Vietnam ("My Cousin Kim"), to '40s film noir narrative ("Araby"). Listening to this record now, I'm absolutely taken aback by its genius. People don't come up with records like this. I mean, they do, but not that often. Although *Mother Juno* has little to no connection to *Loaded* or *Closer*, Jeff's songwriting matches Lou's and Curtis' at their arguably best moments. This is fucking scary. Combine that with an album most people don't even know about, and you have something bordering on a tragedy. Then again, what do I know? I'm notorious for sending Orions 45s out of loved ones.

Kyle Kapow L-U-Vs psychedelic Byrds records: The Byrds, *Younger than Yesterday*; Sleater-Kinney, *Dig Me Out*; The Dream Syndicate, *The Days of Wine and Roses*; the Kapow, *Rolling Blackouts 45*; the Starvations, *Gravity's a Bitch*.



Justin Marciniak (JM)

Ben Folds Five, *The Unauthorized Biography of Reinhold Messner*. When I informed Punk Planet's reviews coordinator that I planned to spotlight Ben Folds Five's swan song, he fired an e-mail to me: "Good fucking choice," he wrote. "Easily my favorite of their records." Another friend said he thinks the first five tracks on *The Unauthorized Biography of Reinhold Messner* form Ben Folds Five's career apex. Personally, I include track six with those five, but the point is I am not the only one who appreciates the thematic continuity, balance of self-pity, self-deprecation, and maturity on this record. The album is about catching up to a world that has left a person choking on its cosmic dust. It's about trying to regain control of a life that has gone to waste. It's for the moments when a person steps into his apartment after a pointless day at work and asks himself, "What have I done with my life?" It's about thoughts and daydreams, the checks and balances that prevent lives from becoming nightmares ridden with regrets. The album opens with "Narcoplepsy," in which the speaker spends his life "Dreaming in streams / flowing between the shores of joy and sadness." Restless and unsatisfied with his life, he pleads: "I'm drowning. / save me. / wake me up." The speakers in "Don't Change Your Plans" and "Hospital Song" feel sorry for themselves because they cannot understand the forces in their lives. In the centerpiece (and single), "Army," the speaker spends the day thinking about time he wasted in college, a dead end band, and a job at Chic-Fil-A. Then, he thinks he should write a screenplay and has wild visions of what his life could be. Ultimately, his "redneck past" pulls him back to reality. In other suites with string sections and songs with odd '70s synths, the speakers attempt to tidy messy relationships and compose laundry lists of regrets. Then the album retires with a hopeful resolution. "Goodnight / goodnight," Folds sings in "Lullabye." "Let the moonlight take the lid off your dreams."

V CDs: Common, *Be*; The Jessica Fletchers, *Less Sophistication* (reviewed this issue); De Novo Dahl, *Cats & Kittens* (reviewed this issue); Junior Wells, *Hoodoo Man Blues*; Fountains of Wayne, *S/T*.



Sean Moeller (SM)

Soundtrack, *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*. I read in a newspaper story the other day (keep in mind that press deadlines made this news at the time it was written) that Tim Burton, the director of the new *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* film, said he didn't like the Gene Wilder original. I was fuming and hence vowed to boycott. So far, so good. Because of my infuriated state, I went back to this soundtrack and nodded wholeheartedly when the candy shop attendant tells a little boy that it looked like he was "born to be a Wonka-er." That's me, and I'll be damned to hear any more blasphemous talk from Mr. Tim Burton. The first adaptation of the Roald Dahl classic was a movie that scared and stirred your eyes and head screws. There's an air of real uneasiness floating through each of the haunting songs written by Leslie Bricusse and Anthony Newley (who worked together on two other occasions), that's enough to—if listened to intently—keep you slightly creeped out late at night. I bought my copy of this album the day after seeing Wilco play at the Orpheum Theatre in Madison, Wisconsin, during the Yankee Hotel Foxtrot tour. With the lights down, a crackle-kissed stream of "Pure Imagination" spilled majestically out of the house speakers before the band took the stage and it was like an assurance that "Jesus, Etc." was going to be magical. It made me swim in the pure conviction that I don't know the ways that some bit of music is going to possess me, just as Augustus Gloop didn't know that laddling handfuls of chocolate from the river and into his mouth would get him possessed by those pressurized pipes. Live and learn, I guess.

Current occupations: OK Go, *Oh No*; the Double, *Loose in the Air*; Mt. Egypt, *Perspectives*; Supergrass, *Road to Rouen*; The High Strung, *Moxie Bravo*; Devendra Banhart, *Cripple Crow*; Danger Doom, *The Mouse & the Mask*; the Happy Bulets, *The Vice and Virtue Ministry*; Stubbs the Zombie Soundtrack; the Crest, *Skeptik*.

through, but there are countless other amazing bands from that region. I hope the Pug Uglies don't get lost in the shuffle like the '90s band August Spies did. I'd kill a family member or two to see them live... they're that damn good. (AE)

Rebellion Records, Mgr. van Roosmalenplein 24, NL-5213 GD's-Hertogenbosch, HOLLAND, www.rebellionrecords.nl

Raging Speedhorn – How The Great Have Fallen, CD

Raging Speedhorn is a British band that walks the line between being a fairly by-the-numbers new millennium "extreme music" band, and being a cool, sludgy, post-thrash, metal band. Tunes like "Oh How the Great Have Fallen," "How Much Can a Man Take," and "Don't Let the Bastards Grind You Down" have powerful, fist pumping riffs and good grooves reminiscent of Pantera or White Zombie's best work. Now, if you automatically think using the term "best work" in association with either of those bands I just mentioned is an oxymoron, than stop reading now and go listen to that new "heavy" Sleater Kinney album. It's probably more your speed, and, really, better for you. At their blandest, "Master Of Disaster" for example, the Speedhorn sound like one of those generic, second stage Ozzfest groups, with all the lame piercings and tattoos and whatnot. This is their third, purportedly "mightiest," album yet, but it's the first I'm hearing of them. I've got to say, as much as they needed to trim some of the fat off of this release to make it truly killer, I'd still be interested in hearing more from them in the future. Definite potential... worth borrowing from a buddy or downloading a few tracks. (AJ)

SPV, www.spvusa.com

Rahim – Jungles, CDEP

Quick to fill the void that Q and Not U left behind, this New York City three-piece take DC influenced post-punk and inject a healthy dose of no-wave post-punk. Smart, atonal melodies cavort over danceable beats to create a playful tension that is both aurally pleasing and inoffensive—such accessibility can be credited to J. Robbins' clean production work. Tense guitars churn out textured This Heat sounds, and then noodle with the rest of the ensemble like most competent indie rock outfits. Such difficult dynamics can backfire into self-indulgent slop, but Rahim execute it with a marksman's precision. I'd hate to seem them on a drunken bad night. And, that's just the music! Dual vocals hark back to later Dischord bands, where awkward boys croon with tunefulness as a number two priority, yet the brimming vocal play teases enough to warrant that endearing charm. So far, so good; this solid EP promises much more to come. (VC)

Frenchkiss Records, www.frenchkissrecords.com

Righteous Jams – Rage of Discipline, CD

"Invasion used to be this band / but now they're playing righteous jams!" I know what you're thinking: Righteous Jams is on Kung Fu Records? Through their friendship with Chad Gilbert of New Found Glory, they were hooked up with his label, Broken Sounds, and in late 2004 Broken Sounds merged with Kung Fu. The only difference in the Kung Fu pressing is that it's enhanced with two videos. What we have here is one of the most crucial straightedge bands of the present. When Righteous

Jams cancelled their Chicago show, Mental played a bunch of Righteous Jams covers. The kids tore the roof off that DePaul University classroom. I completely understand why, though. These songs are classic straightedge hardcore anthems. Upon first listen, I thought Rage of Discipline was totally cheesy, but two days later I found myself thinking, "I want to listen to some Righteous Jams!" Mark my words: ten years from now, this will be considered a landmark straightedge hardcore record. (DA)

Kung Fu, PO Box 38009, Hollywood, CA 90038, www.kungfurecords.com

Satan's Rats – What a Bunch of Rodents, CD

What a Bunch of Rodents is a twenty-song compilation from this '77 British punk band. Satan's Rats play straightforward, power chord punk. Slightly above mediocre, Satan's Rats have aged better than their stupefying Sham 69 counterparts thanks to their mid-tempos and quirky songs about skateboards (quite possibly the first punk skate song?) and girls. This album's charm lies in its mediocrity: *What a Bunch of Rodents* sounds like a bunch of teenagers having fun in their garage, which is what I've always felt rock 'n' roll has been about. Not necessary, but this record wouldn't hurt to own. Fans of the Adverts and the Nips would dig this, though Satan's Rats are not nearly as endearing as either. (RL)

No contact information

Shanghai Valentine – S/T, CDEP

The kids today like sounding darker, possibly because black is trendier or being evil is kind of cool, even if it's an underlying theme. Well, this is a really fun CD that blends hardcore with elements of what made both the Misfits and Alkaline Trio so infectious. This has all the elements of what makes music great. An aggressive style of classic punk with elements of the sing-a-longshouting choruses, catchy hooks, crunchy guitars, and vocals that are both shouted and sung so it's not too tough... but tough enough. I already caught myself doing the air drums to this while having it on in the background. And yes, this does rock out with its cock out in the most dignified way. Five songs are just not enough. But, if you hear this, give it a few listens before writing them off as a Misfits rip off, because there is so much more here than what makes itself obvious on the first listen. (DM)

Ghostworld Records, www.ghostworldrecords.com

Shelby – The Luxury of Time, CD

A cardinal sin (excuse my Catholic school lingo) in the world of sequencing records has got to be placing your strongest song as the leadoff track. *The Luxury of Time* begins with the blistering "The Golden Boy," a rousing jumping off point that utilizes everything right with the disconnected cool that can make bands from New York City so much fun. Yet, soon after "The Golden Boy," Shelby, who is comprised of seasoned musicians Kenny Cummings and Phil Schuster, put the ship on autopilot, opting to churn out moody, ambient pop devoid of everything that made the first song so memorable. Songs such as "Marigolds" are apt but tired sounding and lack a conclusive destination. Yet another record that starts off with some bite but eventually whimpers itself away into the bottom of the pile. (MS)

Gigantic Music, 59 Franklin Street Suite 403 New York, NY 10013
www.giganticmusic.com

Signs of Collapse – Weep for the Lives Your Wishes Never Led CD

First off, I hate hate hate long-winded, ironic, “funny” in-joke song titles that have nothing to do with the song. Unless you’re Dillinger Four, stop doing this. Signs of Collapse apparently went out of their way to raise my ire, giving five of the seven songs on this disc titles like “Don’t Smile When You Play Because It’s Pissing Me Off”. The music? Metalcore. What else? The vocals and attempts at metal guitar heroics aren’t too painful or embarrassing. The shoehorning of Dillinger Escape Plan “crazy” tech/jazz parts into every song, whether they belong or not, is another story. The played-out American Psycho and Reservoir Dogs samples? Come on, now. Some of this could pass for the most deadpan metalcore parody ever, in which case the joke would be on me. (AB)

Saw Her Ghost Records, 316 N. Mission St., Apt. 2, Mt. Pleasant MD 48858, www.sawherghost.com

Small Towns Burn A Little Slower – Mortality as Home Entertainment, CD

It’s official: All the good band names are taken. Why else would you call your group Small Towns Burn A Little Slower? If you couldn’t guess from that ridiculous name, this is cookie cutter emo with all the trimmings. Huge, slick production, quiet/loud/quiet dynamics, and laughably over dramatic singing. Seriously, how do you kids tell these bands apart? Perhaps Small Towns Burn A Little Slower distinguish themselves with especially insipid lyrics, including mixed metaphors like, “Last blast off, this ship is going down.” Ships don’t blast off, you turkey! Another song actually includes the line, “All the king’s horses and all the king’s men will not put this together again,” which forces me to wonder if one of the king’s men could be so kind as to shoot me in the face. Contrarily, cutesy song titles like “1970 Topps Burt By-leven Rookie Card” and “27 Guys Named Steve” make me want to punch these guys in the throat. Of course, it won’t surprise me at all when this group becomes massively huge and I see little peckerheads running around the mall wearing Small Towns Burn A Little Slower T-shirts. Now if you’ll excuse me, I must listen to the Spits for several hours. (JC)

Triple Crown Records, 331 West 57th St., PMB 472, New York, NY 10019 www.triplecrownrecords.com

Soviettes, the – LP III, CD

Once again, these three gals and one lad have got it all going for them. It’s not so often that I can refer to a band as playing pop punk in a complimentary sense. Yup, folks, it’s the best of both worlds: Teeth grinding, gritty, lightning quick, and simultaneously loaded with savory hooks. LP III finds the Minneapolis foursome unleashing their most aggressive and sing-along welcoming songs to date. The intensity factor is up and rising. Hell, this time around there’s a heightened bonus incentive to be found in a sneaky, snotted new wave undercurrent. Count your blessings ‘cause this band just keeps getting better and better. Even the most jaded and over matured punks will feel this take-off-the-Depends-start-shouting-and-failing-your-limbs-until-you-pass-out-from-two-gallons-of-sweat-loss sonic fountain of youth. (BM)

Fat Wreck Chords, PO Box 193690, San Francisco, CA 94119-3690, www.fatwreck.com

Stamen & Pistils – End of the Sweet Parade, CDEP

The cover art is a montage of sepia toned images recalling eras decades old, matched with appropriate fonts fit for a silent film. The art captures the nostalgic longing inherent in the lyrics and in the earthiness of the folks guitars. But there’s nothing retro about the rest of the sound. The acoustic-guitar based songs are shocked with buzzy beats, noise jabs, bleeps, and glitches. The latter elements are predominantly due to its production. The work was mixed by noise artist Derek Morton of the Mikrokytes and mastered by Alan Douches who has worked with Animal Collective and Def Jux. The result is an adept melding of the organic and electronic that can be swooning in its lyricism. With “Peonies and Dahlia Petals,” rumbling electronics give way to strumming, the ballast of an oboe, and vocals that just won’t let go of the song. In “Penny Farthing Fair,” crunchy bass notes are dappled with light guitar picking and interspersed with whirls of synth touches. On “Handpainted Characters,” piano notes list in the static of radio noise before the vocals come in to justly, but gently, berate someone. It’s a wonderful work in a genre that needs even more practitioners. This is the first EP from Stamen & Pistils, based in Washington DC, and at nearly 28 minutes it’s an arguably short album. Let us hope it’s not the last. (BA)

Echelon Productions, P.O. Box 33382, Washington, DC 20033, www.echelonproductions.com

The Starvations – Gravity’s a Bitch, CD

Yeah! Yeah! The Starvations are one of the bands that make me happy it’s 2005! After 2003’s masterpiece *Get Well Soon*, *Gravity’s a Bitch* is a record I’ve been looking forward to. It doesn’t disappoint! Gabriel Hart comes through with the drunken, down-and-out narratives you’d expect from an erudite young man well versed in America’s roots music. Rumors circulating that bassist Jean-Paul Garnier sold his soul at the crossroads to play like the late Rob Ritter have proven true on this *Starvations* go around. Vanessa Gonzales is a punk rock Booker T. Jones, and Ryan Hertz plays guitar like a bona fide ‘40s Beale Street resident. Shit, man... the Starvations bring it like the Dream Syndicate and the Gun Club did in their Ruby days. The Starvations continue to make music of their time, perform like it’s their last day on earth and, as time will tell, you’re not gonna want to sleep on this, as you’ll be kicking yourself in the ass later. *Gravity’s a Bitch* is as essential as eating at the least one meal a day. (RL)

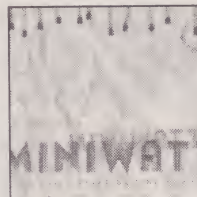
www.goldstandardlabs.com

Strength in Numbers – The Veil, CD

I don’t know if I’m getting more lenient or if the metalcore bands are getting better, but this is another unexpected gem. These guys lean a little more toward traditional metal with double bass, thrashing rhythms, guitar solos, and less of a reliance on breakdowns. There are even some soft guitar interludes that bring to mind any number of Swedish power metal or death metal bands. What probably sets this band apart most is the vocals though. Two singers trade off between the harsh death metal style and a more melodic style that’s like a combination of skate punk and ‘80s rock. It might sound odd, but on songs like “Time’s Not Wasted,” the combination of styles is catchy and heavy at the same time. The rest of the

the sky / wide and never lost.” This sounds important but the meaning eludes my grasp as do most of Malkmus’ lyrics. “Freeze the Saints” is a breezy, sentimental tune with a country edge, sort of like “Range Life.” If you’re like me and you read every music rag written in English then you’ve probably already read about “No More Shoes” with its epic solo guitar jam and vocal part that recalls Kiss’ “I Was Made for Loving You,” in which Malkmus actually sings in counterpoint to his own melody at song’s end. “Mama” sounds like it was written and recorded by some ‘70s band like Styx or Peter Dinklage with vocals that lack Malkmus’ usual irony. “Kindling for the Master” is a robot dance track with vocals that sound like they were run through an envelope filter, making them sound like Jerry Garcia’s guitar. I’m sure it’s been done before but this is the first time I’ve heard it. Finally, the catchy four on the floor beat of “Baby C’mon” will force you to rock whether you like it or not. All of the songs are excellent and each keeps their own identity through unusual sounds and memorable melodies. (SJ)

Matador Records, 625 Broadway, NYC, NY 10012, matadorrecords.com

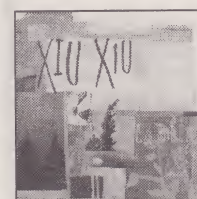


Miniwatt – I Can’t Stand Waiting For It, CDEP

There are many bands that have caused veritable earthquakes to the standard sound of music as we know it today: Fugazi, Pere Ubu... hell, even Slint, to name a few. Through their unaffected and genuinely unique approach to music, they created something that had not existed before in such a form, and in turn affected hundreds of bands to come after them. Miniwatt is a group that has clearly been taken under the influence of those previous innovations, yet unlike many other groups,

has augmented them. Their ability to create another musical earthquake has yet to be seen, but with a disc like this, they are sure to cause a major rumble or two. Thick drums, distorted guitars and general anxiety abound on *I Can’t Stand Waiting For It*, an EP from Rhode Island residents and general noisemakers Miniwatt. The most basic elements of any standard group—drums, guitar, vocals, bass—are taken and distorted, tweaked out, sharpened, and then re-distorted all over again. While the general fuzz compliments their overall sound, it is far from the highlight. The lyrics of Michael Esten turn into swift declarations as they are spun out of line through the cutting delivery of his unique voice—thin and wiry, yet ultimately powerful. “Real Smiles” rolls in with a thundering guitar attack, deep bass, and hard drums, all covered in a thick layer of dissonance in order to give a proper introduction to the band. Standout track “In the Dark” starts with a singular guitar line until the drums tumble in, and Esten’s voice chops through the heaving sound. With such a heavy, hard-hitting aesthetic, it is often difficult to believe that there are, in fact, only three people making this music. These songs swirl around and rush into one another with unique timing and on-point delivery, while remaining seemingly unable to control the static energy and frustration bursting forth. The final track, “My World is My Own,” is so anthemic that it could be considered the unofficial Miniwatt theme song. At seven tracks and 13 minutes in length, the only problem with *I Can’t Stand Waiting For It* is that it’s over far too quickly. But 13 minutes or not, there is no question that this band should be huge, and I can only hope that they eventually get their proper dues. This EP is enough to make me hope that the next major scene to throw the media into a frenzy will be Rhode Island’s; it will be comprised entirely of Miniwatt, and it will take the world by storm. (SBM)

Arbeid Records, 616 Willett Ave., Riverside, RI 02915; www.arbeid.com



Xiu Xiu – La Foret, CD

Fuck emo kids. They don’t know what “emotional” really is. Emo kids sit there and listen to their My Chemical Romance bullshit, and think that is sad, heart-felt music. Psssh. Give them a Xiu Xiu CD, and they’ll be bawling their little eyes out for weeks. My lord, this is depressing. But don’t get me wrong; it’s also unbelievably gorgeous. Xiu Xiu is Jamie Stewart... disturbing, haunting, yet poignantly beautiful. His bizarre style shines through with every instrument on the record, from

the autoharp to snare drums and other percussion. At times, this record is so soft, that you’ll have to tell your friend in the car to shut up so you can hear Jamie Stewart’s tortured, pain-ridden voice over various guitars and harmoniums. At other times, the songs explode into a frenzy of electronic beats and jagged guitars with unknown results. With Xiu Xiu, you never know what to expect; a song could go from deathly quiet to devastatingly loud in an instant. That is the beauty of Stewart. There’s really something to be said about the simplicity of quiet Xiu Xiu. Maybe it is Stewart’s tormented voice—his sounds of sorrow and sadness. Perhaps it is the delicacy and strain of the instruments to be played that softly. Whatever it is, it’s beautifully depressing. Cynical lyrics about rape, death, and sex are whispered and shouted with the intensity of an opera singer, which is kind of what Stewart really is—a disturbed opera singer. Singing unconventional kinds of operas, of course. I don’t believe your average opera singers would sing about raping George W Bush or sexual confusion, but Xiu Xiu is in no way conventional. A trip down the Xiu Xiu path leads to an addiction in sadness—an addiction to the pain. And while I may be addicted to the music, I sure as hell am glad I’m not Jamie Stewart. (MB)

5 Rue Christine, www.5rc.com

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHTS



Sarah Moody (SBM)

Nick Cave & the Bad Seeds, *The Boatman's Call*. Sadly, I cannot claim to have come upon the music of Nick Cave all on my own—he came by recommendation of a friend of mine back in high school, who encouraged me to buy this album in particular. Having never listened to Cave's work before, I was skeptical. However, about one minute into the first track ("Into My Arms"), I was already hooked by the dark thrill of Cave's stately voice and unmatched lyricism. As opposed to much of his previous work, on *The Boatman's Call*, Cave is unabashedly world-weary, in both sound and subject matter, and taps into an old sense of southern Gothic through both haunting lyrics and sophisticated arrangements. "Lime Tree Arbour" offers one of the more striking vignettes on the album, wrapping the listener into images of a gentle scene between two lovers, unaffected by the outside world. Even given its focus on love and religion, *Boatman* is not without its darker moments. Cave tackles the onerous topic of mental illness on "Where Do We Go Now But Nowhere?" with striking lines of loss and anguish as he watches his former lover "[sit] gnawing her knuckles in the chemical light." Both austere and compelling, Cave manages to marry his previous gloom with a forlorn sense of beauty in this haunting track. "West Country Girl" receives help from Bad Seed Warren Ellis (also of the Dirty Three) on violin, which acts as a counterpart to Cave's guttural bass as he verbally tackles this quick, near-literary piece. Cave reaches his most poignant with one of the more simple songs on the album, "People Ain't No Good," a dismal yet elegant take on the pettiness of humanity and the consequent need for escape. Amid the brushed snares, piano ballads, and occasional organ, Cave finds a rare honesty that is both simple and entirely human—a quality I have yet to find matched in any other work. With a unique ability to retain poignancy despite countless listens, I have no doubt in my mind that this album is, and will remain, a revelation unto itself and will always offer a dark comfort to those who seek it.

Pink is the new album list: Miniwatt, *I Can't Stand Waiting For It*; Mogwai, *Come On Die Young*; Wolf Parade, *Apologies to the Queen Mary*; Mount Eerie, *34 Songs: Live in Copenhagen*; Sufjan Stevens, *Illinois*



Scott J. Morrow (SJM)

Fugees, *The Score*. Before Wyclef Jean was so big that he was doing Twix commercials, his intermittent backup vocals from a Roberta Flack cover were inspiring a band name for a few friends of mine that were destined for local pop stardom (Two Times Wyclef, to be specific). His contributions to *The Score* go far beyond those infamous, reverberated words, however, as the infectious production of neck-breaking beats and catchy-as-hell hooks from him and his pseudo-cousin Pras laid the groundwork for the true star of The Fugees: Lauryn Hill. Hill's bestowal of talents on *The Score* is undeniable, and to think of how shrewd her rhymes and flow were before the age of 21 is just crazy. For proof, let's examine "The Beast" and "Ready or Not": ["The Beast"] "The subconscious psychology that you use against me / if I lose control / will send me to the penitentiary / 'cause this Alcatraz is shot up like Al-Hajj Malik Shabazz / high class could bypass but my ass gets the razz / and the fuzz treat bruh like their manhood never was / and if you're too powerful you'll get bugged like Peter Tosh and Marley was / and my word does nothing against the feds / so my eyes stay red as I chase crazy bald heads / word up." ["Ready or Not"] "Bless you if you represent the Fu / but I'll hex you with some witches brew if you're doo-doo / voodoo / I could do what you do / easy / believe me / frontin' niggas give me heebie-jeebies / so while you're imitating Al Capone / I'll be Nina Simone / and defecating on your microphone." Now couple that with the fact that most of the choruses are replete with her amazingly gorgeous voice and the title of MVF (most valuable Fugee) is a slam dunk. All overflowing praise aside, though, the Fugees had a chemistry that was overtly absent from all of their solo endeavors. Brainy rhymes, eccentric homage's to pop songs and farcical interludes ("this is a Chinese restaurant, but like Burger King, have it your way!") all assisted in making *The Score* the paragon that it is. Now if we could only do something about Pras' verses...

Two times, times: Volta do Mar, 03>98; Venetian Snares, Rossz Csillag Alatt Született; Jaga Jazzist, *What We Must*; Coalesce, 0:12 Revolution in Just Listening; Pigeon John, *Sings the Blues*.



(Mr.) Dana Morse (DM)

Undead, the, *Act Your Rage*. Being a fan of the Misfits is one thing that is pretty easily accepted. Being a fan of the Undead is something that is hard to swallow for some. Who are the Undead you may ask? Well, I'll tell you. When the Misfits first decided to add a guitarist to their ranks (yes, they started recording music without a guitarist) they took on Bobby Steele. Actually, he may have been the second guitarist, but whatever. After a few years and a tour where Danzig got arrested in England, they returned to the states and the Misfits ousted Bobby for a younger "fits brother by the name Doyle. Anyway, Mr. Steele formed the much despised Undead. For whatever reason, the Undead never caught on too well even after several albums, EPs, and singles. He used the same formula and similar sound that he helped make with the Misfits with: a very stripped down punk sound with loud bass lines and crunchy guitars, but adding more of a snarled vocal style to the mix. The Undead tend to play more catchy numbers than aggressive tunes, but there are always songs about B-movies, the poor, and the failure of desire and love. They even cover "Eve of Destruction" and an Undead version of "RATTPUNK" which Bobby Steele appeared on the Misfits version of. So if you happen to come across this lost gem of punk rock history, don't hesitate—this record is so awesome in so many ways. Some of the tracks, like "Put Your Clothes Back On," "Social Reason," and "Gimme Your Autograph" (I believe), appear on the Live Slayer live record which may sound alright but I can't say for sure. It's good shit overall, and now you know.

This shit is my jam: Sly & the Family Stone, *S/T*; Minus the Bear, *Menos el Oso*, Buck 65, *Secret House Against the World*; Closet Monster (reviewed this issue); anything by the Weakerthans.



Brian Moss (BM)

Babyland, *You Suck Crap*. Appreciating industrial music has always been a struggle for me. Albeit, it's most likely an exertion of ignorance and underexposure, but the bands I've crossed paths with, musically and thematically, have generally seemed over dramatic and contrived. Remember the "evil" character from Kids in the Hall? Imagine him as a rave enthusiast and you've got my industrial stereotype pegged. Then, there's Babyland: saber toothed, uncompromisingly severe, rabid, break neck and teetering over the boundaries of control. The Los Angeles-based duo founded them-

album follows suit, alternating between crushing metal and more melodic parts. I thought I'd actually reviewed these guys before, but I don't remember anything this good. (NS)

Ironbound, P.O. Box 8692, Elizabeth, NJ 07208, www.ironboundrecordings.com

Symptoms, the - Middle Finger Romance, CD

When someone writes a song about needing a seat-belt for their mustache, you've just got to put your reading glasses down and go, "Oh now, what the fuck is this?" But what it does is unhinges you a bit. You become receptive to blather and bending the rules of sensibility. It's at times like these when Dukes of Hazzard or Deuce Bigalow: European Gigolo bring in the biggest box office receipts. The Symptoms—Athens, Ohio's finest schizoid group with the tonnage of jittery angst and cocksure fight to pack a nuke—are positively knocked out with just gripping and ripping and wailing about rock 'n' roll and whatever other crazy things come out of their mouths. Josh Bergstrand and Sonya Decman trade alternating and coupled barks, sounding like a spirited domestic dispute set to the mixtape of the Distillers, Hole and elementary attempts at Farquet angularity, blasting on a boom box somewhere near the front steps. (SM)

www.symptomsrock.com

Three Piece Combo - S/T, CD

This band claims to create music with the following rules in mind: "no singing, no irony, no gimmicks, and definitely no 'jamming.'" Though having a set of rules to create music by might be inherently gimmicky in the first place, it remains a noble concept, indeed. That being said, this disc has more noodles than a bowl full of Ramen. Alternating between noise and out of sync stop/starts, the combo seems strives to attempt some semblance of that catchy post-punk sound that the kids are into these days, yet falls relatively short of doing so in each attempt. The sharp guitars on "Paperwork" resemble the sounds of an arcade game, but the song quickly becomes too discombobulated to retain any sort of listening power. This being their debut, perhaps better things will come of Three Piece Combo in the future. But for now, this disc remains not a set of compositions, but an ongoing list of random outbursts and squabbles that occasionally fit into a song. (SBM)

Feast or Famine, www.feastorfamine.com

Tunnel of Love - S/T, CD

The cover reads in a cartoonish text balloon: "What up freaks! This is Tunnel of Love from Brookline Massachusetts. We are going to blow your pussies out!!!" Pictured are three long-haired shirtless guys in black-and-white striped tights and a blow-up fuck doll wearing a Tunnel of Love t-shirt. It's standard garage material with relentlessly repetitive riffs, though they add a lot more feedback shrieks. Vocals are mostly guttural and turn to tiresome screams at most points. The noisy aspects are the best part; the cover songs are not—these only highlight their lack of creativity in a way that original songs can't. They do Hendrix's "Hey Joe," though no expert guitar work is provided, and they try the Stones' "Paint It Black," though they shouldn't have, stripping it of all memorable elements. If intended ironically, it almost works. (BA)

ECA, www.tunneloflove666.com

Ultralyd - Chromosome Gun, CD

This album literally explodes into being, a Big Bang of bass drum and cymbals that spurns forth squealing saxophone, pulsating bass, and cascades of drum hits from all pieces of the kit in all manners of ways. And, that's just the opener, "Beator." These improvisers are from Norway, which is a center of improv today, and they create a free-form jazz with numerous rock elements: the pounding drums, the often driving and riff-heavy bass, harsh and noisy guitars, and sax and clarinet played like feedback shrieks. Like a lot of improv, Ultralyd it favors the intense onslaughts that form an overwhelming and chaotic wall of sound, though they also slow it down in more moodish pieces, as with "Ejaculatorium," with drones from the sax, humming bass, and exploratory guitar. It's the noise-rock elements that separate this band from a lot of jazz improv and make it quite interesting. (BA)

Load, P.O. Box 35, Providence, RI 02901, www.loadrecords.com

Underoath - They're Only Chasing Safety, CD

I am unsure as to when this sound became the next big thing, but regardless of when it occurred, it is a sure sign that the Doldrums Revolution is at hand. Underoath (one word and lowercase because it's hardcore, man) do that whole modern punk/hardcore thing with some electronics sparingly thrown into the mix. You know, the currently trendy made-for-radio-while-being-dangerous thing. The vocals are the style du jour, alternating between the trite and whiny singsong sound and can't-you-hear-the-pain-in-my-voice? screams. Their wearisome hardcore clichés and undistinguishable rock sounds are tired, but the tortured soul vocals put Underoath over the top. And you know that any song titles as stereotypical and threadbare as "A Boy Brushed Red Living in Black and White" and "Some Will Seek Forgiveness, Others Escape," will be torn asunder in any review of mine. Being objective means that I'll have to admit to there being a few legitimately decent moments, but the bottom line is that I'm not 17 and I can't listen to this. (SJM)

Tooth & Nail, P.O. Box 12698, Seattle, WA 98111, www.toothandnail.com

Xiu Xiu - Fleshettes, CDEP

At its best, Xiu Xiu sounds like a seriously unglued Conor Oberst backed by all of 18th-century China falling down the stairs, over amplified. The two tracks on this European EP don't quite reach that pinnacle. First of all, they're quiet. Opener "Fleshettes" creaks like some kind of electronic drizzle. Unfortunately, it's enough to drown out most of Jamie Stewart's beyond-melodramatic lyrics—all but one line about passing under a rainbow and changing sexes. The end feeling is that of a dreary tremble, and one that most would be hard-pressed to remember hearing even on the 14th listen. "Helsabot of Caraleebot" is a revision of a particularly quiet and unsettling ("I did something bad / I got into a fight about drugs") track from the band's *Fag Control* CD. This time around, a wan-voiced girl handles the vocals, mimicking Stewart's twitches and tweaks to ill effect. (TS)

Acuarela, P.O. Box 18136, 28080 Madrid, Spain; acuareladiscos.com

Year of Desolation - Your Blood, My Vendetta, CD

With a song titled "Jeffrey Dahmer's Cum Soaked Tampon," I think it's fitting to use the word "brutal."

Everything about this release is pretty evil, from the cover art to the liner notes to the music. And for some reason, it's all pretty convincing. Is that a good thing? I guess that's up to you. The music is definitely a lot heavier and more talented than similar bands that I've heard. Think pounding metalcore with lots of interesting twists. You have the basics like thick, muted breakdowns and the dual guitar harmonics, but the rhythms switch all over the place and the guitar parts sound fresh and original, making it amazing that the crushing drums can even keep up, and the singer's voice is suitably blood curdling and terrorizing. Unfortunately (or thankfully), there aren't any lyrics to follow along with his insanity. This isn't my favorite type of music, but these guys are definitely talented and will make you take notice. Or else. (NS)

www.corrosiverecordings.com

Young, Gina—She's so Androgynous, CD

Somewhat ironically, Young has a voice that sounds older, considering her youthful appearance—that is, until you start listening to what she's saying. Riot Girl and queer politics abound on this disc, though it's all singer-centric, as opposed to tackling any greater struggle. Again, Young's voice can be a powerful part of these songs, especially on "Lou's Song," though the title of this album tells you precisely what nearly the entire thing will be dealing with, which in turn forces her self-righteousness into a parody of itself. Most of these tracks deal with how the world is out to get her for being "different" ("All the girls just stare at me / and all the men just stare at me"); how the world is out to punish her for failed relationships ("Now waking up is okay I guess / except the whole world / still wants me dead"); and how the entire world is fully ignorant ("You say I'm too militant / but maybe I'm just passionate / yeah maybe if you gave a shit you'd get it"). I tried to give one, but it's difficult to do so when everything is so one-sided, self-absorbed, and poorly written. These topics have been tackled before, and by people who had strength enough to turn the songs into more than adolescent outbursts—perhaps at some point Young's approach will match the maturity of her voice and reach that level as well. (SBM)

Exotic Fever Records, P.O. Box 297, College Park, MD 20741

V/A—Four Women No Cry, CD

With a focus on electronic textures and smooth vocals, this disc serves as an introduction to four different international female artists who likely would have otherwise gone undiscovered. Giving a twist on the old Marley tune "No Woman No Cry," one of the hopes the Monika label had in putting this record out was to prove that female artists are not, in fact, always "harbingers of sadness." To add another twist, each woman also claims a different nationality: Argentinean, Georgian, Parisian, and Austrian, respectively. Each artist is given between four and six tracks to display her talents, and while the approach differs greatly between these musicians, there remains a surprising level of variety within each artist's individual repertoire. Found sounds, slow notes on a piano and beats abound on the contributions from Rosario Blefari, but the creations of Tusia Beridze and Eglantine Gouzy, who take the middle slots on the disc, are the highlights by far. The intimate style of Beridze allows each of her tracks to melt into one another (es-

pecially the standout "Wound"), and demonstrate a kinship to the electronic ramblings of Dntel. Gouzy's creations are eccentric and sharp, often offering up her vocals as part of the overall manipulations. Atmospheric, intricate, and entirely unique, by the end of this lengthy compilation, you will be knee deep in understated layers and texture on a grand scale, feeling somehow relieved simply by knowing that this music exists. Give it a spin. (SBM)

Monika Enterprise, P.O. Box 620349, 10793 Berlin

V/A—Everything Comes and Goes, a Tribute to Black Sabbath, CD

The *Nativity in Black* compilations from 1994 and 2000 remain the most recognized Black Sabbath cover assortments to date, but those did little in the way of enlisting acts from markedly different genres to interpret the classics (save for Busta Rhymes). *Everything Comes and Goes*, a Temporary Residence stab at just that, has its hits and misses like most. Experimental electronic duo Matmos kick things off with a glitchy rendition of "F/X," an admirable feat for not having much original material to work with in the first place. Two-piece tech masters Ruins toss a drum and fuzz bass pasting of a couple dozen Sabbath riffs together, seemingly the same as their album version, sans weird-ass vocals. Grails start to make things interesting with a noisy, chamber rock arrangement of "Black Sabbath," and Four Tet keep it going with a beautiful, electro-acoustic cover of "Iron Man" with numerous overlaid harmonies. Four Tet's adaptation is similar to that of jazz trio The Bad Plus (who probably should have been given a ring) in that it almost takes a complete life of its own. The Curtis Harvey Trio mark the mid-point of the album with the last interesting performance, a string-filled cover of "Changes" that morphs into alt-country (and is the first to feature vocals). None of the final four tracks are bad, per se (except for Race Bannon's odd, screamy, whiny, talking vocal nonsense), but none of them are particularly interesting, either. *Everything Comes and Goes* is definitely worth picking up if you can find it cheap, but I am not sure if you would want to pay full price for nine tracks, half of which are average. (SJM)

Temporary Residence Limited, P.O. Box 60097, Brooklyn, NY 11206, www.temporaryresidence.com

V/A—The Free Design Redesigned, CD

Ambitious and three long years in the works, the Free Design Redesigned features some of today's heavy hitters remixing the cult classic '60s pop-psych works of the Free Design. DJ Danger Mouse, Peanut Butter Wolf, members of Belle and Sebastian, the Mars Volta and many more play roles in contribution. While the project is fairly innovative and has some standout moments, the standardized compilation hit and miss background bores are present, and the end result probably won't appeal to the masses. As I feel about most covers and remixes, the grandest works are those that distance themselves the furthest from the originals, splicing in modernized and personal styles. There's a good amount of the said renovations to be found in this collection of songs, but then again, if you're not an avid fan of retro pop and/or electronica/hip hop remix collaborations, it's most likely that this won't be your cup of tea. (BM)

Light in the Attic Records, PO Box 31970 Seattle, WA 98103

DEMOLITION DERBY CD-R REVIEWS

4Fodder—Memory Gag, CD-R

It's usually a good thing to be compared to Nirvana, but here, the parallels nearly reach mimicry. Even so, it's really good—these guys have affecting riffs with harsh edges and lots of sound samples that they overlay which changes it up. (BA)

www.4fodder.com

Anonymous Anarchist—Anything Can Happen..., CD-R

Old school hardcore with the attitude, anger, and rough sound to match. These lads are obviously fans of Leftover Crack, minus the ska. (BN)

Rabid Possum, PMB 60, 595 W. Main St. Norwich, Ct. 06360

Fatal Riot—S/T, CD-R

The vocals remind me of early AFI. Musically they're straight up fast punk. This is no frills, lunthead punk.

PO Box 621, Alhambra, CA 91802, www.fatalriot.com

Hexacron—S/T, CD-R

Pretty cool technical grind/metal with a Voivod fetish (and volume swells hijacked from Human Remains). Word of advice: this stuff works better with way shorter songs. (AB)

2156 West Chicago Ave. Apt. 3, Chicago IL 60622

Kennesaw—S/T, CD-R

Fiery post-hardcore from New Haven. Heavy, crashing guitars, intricate rhythms, and growling vocals. Stripped down, straightforward, and really quite good. (CB)

www.k-saw.com

No Shadow Kick, the—Spatializing Sound in the Time Domain, CD-R

Kind of alt-country at times, kind of dub at times, kind of weird, but good. However, the songs don't

meld together too well. This could be better down the road, but right now, they don't use the chemistry they have. (DM)

No Shadow Kick, PO Box 880, Northampton, MA 01060 www.noshadowkick.com

Palomar—3.5, CDEP

More great poppy, female-fronted indie rock. I guess this is a 6 song, digital-only release (aren't I special?), so check their website for details. (NS)

www.palomartheband.com

Roundeye—S/T, CD-R

Decent-sounding demo from this Chicago-based pop punk trio. Their brand of pop punk recalls the kind of stuff you heard on Lookout! in the mid '90s. (EG)

www.roundeyesucks.com

Sever The Hands—Sever The Hands, CDR

(Formerly named Awake.) Sludgy punk that's hampered by a sludgy mix here, but nevertheless conveys appropriate zeal and fury. Nifty packaging, too. (CB)

www.severthehands.com

Treasure Mammal—Secret Treasures, CDR

IDM-inspired glitch coupled with tongue-in-cheek, hyperactive shout-rants about such modern phenomenons as MySpace and John Secada. "Spring Break" is TM's self-referencing swansong by far. (SBM)

Treasure Mammal, www.treasuremammal.com

Wasteland—S/T, CDR

To hear something that can rip like a lawn mower plowing through a paper bag is just plain awesome. So are these guys. Frantic metal infused hXc that just kicks serious ass. (DM)

Wasteland c/o Brad Rheault, (Gardner St Oxford, MA 01540 www.spawntildie.com/wasteland

RERUNS REISSUES FROM PUNK'S PAST

Behind Enemy Lines—Know Your Enemy, CD

This album originally came out on Tribal War Records. The vocals remind me a lot of the guy from Green Jello. I couldn't help but wait for him to sing, "Little pig / little pig / let me in!" Musically, it reminds me a lot of Aus Rotten. If you have spiky hair and wear all black, you probably own the Tribal War pressing of this album. (DA)

Profane Existence Records, PO Box 8722, Minneapolis, MN 55408 www.profaneexistence.com

Blacklisted—We're Unstoppable, CD

Blacklisted is a likable hardcore band, producing tough, new school hardcore with a fast early '80s vibe when appropriate. This collection showcases them at their finest. Included is the entire *Our Youth is Wasted* session, as well as a number of hard to find demos. Philadelphia has a lot of other bands like this, but Blacklisted's unrelenting assault of "mosh parts" in-between fast classic hardcore rants make them stand out. (AE)

Deathwish Incorporated, 35 Congress Street Suite 336, Salem, MA 01970-5567, www.deathwishinc.com

Dimbulb—Trip Hammers, CD

Dimbulb were a band from the '90s out of Ohio that played sludgcore akin to the Melvins. The music

is super heavy but the vocals are sung in a type of droning speak-sing which takes some getting used to. Occasional sound textures fade in and out while the band pounds on lending a psychedelic vibe. (SJ)

Anti-Music, PO Box 20178, Ferndale, MI 48220

Shrimp Boat—Speckly, CD

Many moons ago, before Sam Prekop and Eric Claridge made known their affinity for big ponds and baked goods, they spent their days in Shrimp Boat. 16 years after its original, vinyl-only release, the band's debut album doesn't sound dated; rather, *Speckly*, with its banjos, trumpets, cellos, and saxes, is a timeless blend of genres (rock, of course, along with country, blues, and jazz). At times, the vocals and various instruments on *Speckly* are a bit off key, but the mistakes are endearing more than anything. With each song sounding quite different from the last, it's difficult to tire of the record. What's not difficult is imagining the members of Shrimp Boat moving on to bigger and better things, as they would do in the next decade. This album's not earth-shattering, but it's good enough to satisfy not only fans of the Sea & Cake, but also anyone fond of fun, eclectic ditties. (KJ)

AUM Fidelity, PO Box 70147, Brooklyn, NY 11272, www.aumfidelity.com

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHTS

selves in electronic sequences and samples, but the expanses of punk and hardcore equally scoured to the bone. I catch myself referring to them as industrial due to their literal use of industrial machinery as instruments. Giant oil drums bludgeoned with tree branches and blade saws: the live shows were insanity. I can remember being worked into frenzies and then burned numerous times by the downpour of sparks that bled out from the metal on metal mayhem. *You Suck Crap* is a grand introduction to the apocalyptic hate tribe known as Babyland. "Mindfuck" and "Motor.Tool.Appliance" work as the albums' undoubted throwaways. The last I heard of them was back in the late '90s after they had been banned from Gilman St. for throwing bulk sized bags of manure over the crowd. Shit happens... but maybe, just maybe, they're still lurking out there in the trenches of humanity, secretly waging battle plans.

Bicycle/Skateboard + Headphones = : Black Halos, *The Violent Years*; Party Of Helicopters, *Please Believe It*; Nouvelle Vague, *S/T*; Clem Snide, *End of Love*; Toys That Kill, *We Control The Sun*; the Coup, *Steal This Album*



Bart Niedzialkowski (BN)

Slapstick – *Discography*. Slapstick didn't enjoy a particularly long life as a band, and yet their impact on the Chicago scene remains as strong today as it was in 1997, the year the band suddenly called it quits. With members that have gone on to perform in bands like Alkaline Trio, Tuesday, the Honor System, the Broadways, and the Lawrence Arms, is it really any surprise? With the success of Alkaline Trio and the Lawrence Arms well documented, Slapstick is often overlooked by those who never got into the mid-'90s ska-punk craze, but the band stands on its own. It wasn't long after the band broke up that Mike Park, head of Asian Man Records, decided to re-release the band's lone LP and throw in most of the various 7" and compilation tracks to round out the package. The end result captured the essence of one of the most energetic bands to ever call Chicago home. Slapstick's brand of ska-punk was as frenetic as it was energetic, but there was a message in the songs as well. Crowd favorite "Alternative Radio" took on the lack of variety on Chicago's, you guessed it, alternative radio stations, while "What I Learned" spoke about some of the social issues we face at school, work, and daily life. That's not to say that Slapstick wasn't fun, most of the songs dealt with growing up and were sung in a rapid, manic voice that rang loud above the rhythm and horn sections which accented the upbeat, infectious melodies. It's that infectiousness that makes Slapstick's discography CD such an important part of the Chicago scene. (BN)

Heavy Play: Hot Water Music, *Fuel for the Hate Game*; Rumbleseat, *Is Dead*; A Radio With Guts, *Beat Heart Sweet Stereo*; the Lawrence Arms, *Cocktails & Dreams*.



Reviewer Spotlight: Missy Paul

Hole, *Live Through This*. Had Kurt Cobain not killed himself and had everything between him and Courtney Love been happily ever after, *Live Through This* would easily be considered one of the best rock albums ever. Instead, questions about the album's authenticity make people forget the greatness it contains. Maybe Cobain wrote everything, and maybe Courtney Love is nothing more than an opportunistic actress, but the power, emotion, and near-perfection created on this album cannot be denied. On songs like "Violet," "Asking for It," and "Jennifer's Body," the power pop hooks coupled with Love's cooing draw you in for the kill. Just as you're comfortable, Patty Schemel starts hitting her drums a bit harder, Eric Erlandson's guitar gets a little faster, Kristen Pfaff's bass becomes a smidge heavier, and Love begins her caterwauling. Then, among the unrelenting punk pop assaults of "Plump," "She Walks on Me," and "Gutless," the band slips in "Doll Parts" and "Softer, Softest." These two tracks may be mellow, but with their sound of desperation, they match the intensity of the album beautifully. Song for song, this album is fantastic and completely overlooked. Perhaps one day we will all know the truth behind *Live Through This*, but until then I'm content with slipping it in my player, forgetting all the bullshit, and reveling in one damn good record.

Hot Jams I Love: White Stripes, *Get Behind Me Satan*; Kanye West, *Late Registration*; Fiery Furnaces, *Gallowbird's Bark*; Jesus and Mary Chain, *Darklands*; Tank Girl Soundtrack



Rex Reason (RR)

D.R.I., *Dealing With It*. There may be no better '80s adolescent artifact than this record. No, it may not be the best hardcore punk record of all time, but nothing else quite captures the combination of youthful energy in search of release, and the depressing doomsday atmosphere of being young during any portion of the 1980s like *Dealing With It*. The tempos are almost always mind-numbingly fast (total confusion, even when reading the lyrics as they're spat a million miles an hour, starts here) except for when Dirty Rotten Imbeciles throw in the occasional crawling chug breakdown. The metal influences had already crept in at points, but they weren't trying to be a metal band just yet. That's notable because as soon as they decided they were metal, their records became a lot less enjoyable. Much like the narrator in *The Big Lebowski* failing to explain why the Dude was the man for his time, I am failing to explain why *Dealing With It* is the record for its time. That doesn't make it any less so.

Five chances to praise or demean my taste: Matson Jones, *S/T*; FM Bates, *Everybody Out...Shark in the Water*; Black Mountain – *S/T*; Totimoshi, *¿Mysterioso?* reissue; the Orphans, *Electric S b/w W.W.W.D.*



Kyle Ryan (KR)

Sugar, *Copper Blue*. It's hard to overestimate the impact Bob Mould has had on my musical life. To say I'm a fan of his work in Hüsker Dü, Sugar, and solo is a gross understatement, and it all began with this album. It came out when I was about 16, and I only had a very limited understanding of Hüsker Dü at the time. But I immediately connected with *Copper Blue*, Mould's debut album as part of a band for the first time since Hüsker Dü. His guitar playing—melodic, technical, punkish—is in fine form on this album, particularly in tracks like "The Act We Act," "Helpless" and "Changes." His trademark, relatively nasal vocals sound strong from track to track. The songs all had a certain power, even when relatively slow; "The Slim" may lack the other tracks' mostly brisk, deliberate tempo, but it's one of the most ominous, gut-wrenching songs I've encountered, both musically and lyrically. A lot of people view this album as the

pinpoint of Mould's work during the '90s, and it's hard to argue: *Copper Blue* is 10 straight tracks of excellence, the sound one that bands who followed Sugar would try to copy many times over. It's the perfect mix of tuneful melodies, punk-inspired power, and smart guitar playing, and it should be required listening. *Copper Blue* introduced me to Hüsker Dü's legacy and one of the finest songwriters of the past 25 years. This album will sound just as strong in 50 years as it did the day it came out and subsequently blew people's minds.

The act we act is wearing thin: Criteria, *When We Break*; The Soviettes, *LP III*; Foo Fighters, *In Your Honor*; The City on Film, *In Formal Introduction*; Say Hi to Your Mom, *Ferocious Mopes*.



Reviewer Spotlight: Neal Shah (NS)

Vio-lence, *Eternal Nightmare*. I thought that since I receive so much bad metalcore to review, I should review an actual metal release that might have gone overlooked. After the Big Three of thrash metal, there were a lot of great bands that might not have been as popular, but made up for it in technicality, brutality, and sheer aggression. A prime example was the Bay Area band Vio-lence, who released the devastating debut, *Eternal Nightmare*, back in 1988. My friends and I actually found out about this band from the metal video series called *Hard & Heavy* that featured both established as well as up-and-coming metal bands. Vio-lence was definitely an up-and-comer that caught our eye. The footage showed a crazy show from one of the Bay Area clubs that also gave rise to bands like Heathen, Testament, and Exodus. This was also around the time that Metallica was growing in popularity and declining in quality, so it was awesome to see a new crop of bands with that early, raw intensity. And Vio-lence's first album was nothing short of intense. Filled with squealing guitars, shrieked vocals and a thick rhythm section, this album still continues to impress me, as well as some friends who had never heard it before I played it for them. Like most great thrash metal, there's a melodic quality that hooks you, but musically and lyrically, these guys were a lot more malicious than their predecessors. Songs like "Serial Killer," "Bodies on Bodies" and "Calling in the Coroner" weren't interested in history books, mythical evils, or Stephen King novels. This was real life sickness and depravity, terrorizing and exhilarating all at once. And, the music was equally sick and intense without losing that seemingly divergent melodic factor. This is still probably my favorite thrash metal album of all time, and it's good to see that it's recently been re-issued for new generations to enjoy.

What a way to go out, out like a sucker: My awesome Go For It! mix; Senator Flux, *Storyknife*; Goo Goo Dolls, *A Boy Named Goo*; Sad Lovers & Giants, *Epic Garden Music*; Municipal Waste, *Hazardous Mutatio*; Hammerfall, *Legacy Of Kings*.



Matthew Sibio (MS)

Oasis, *Definitely Maybe*. While I don't normally subscribe to the traditional notion of "punk," I feel as though I must defend myself in choosing to highlight a classic Britpop album in a magazine that incorporates the word in its moniker. While it seems so foreign to take Oasis seriously circa 2005 (stateside anyway), we must remember that things weren't always like they are now. Ahem... did anyone else's heart break when the brothers Gallagher sheepishly admitted that their band was no longer the biggest band on the planet on VH1's "Behind the Music"? Anyway, back in the band's mid-'90s heyday, Oasis had not yet become bloated caricatures, but instead existed as nothing more than hooligans with large aspirations and an obvious admiration for the Stone Roses. Like all great debuts, *Definitely Maybe* succeeded because the band played as if they had something to prove. Everything about this album sounded huge. Songs like "Supersonic" and "Rock 'N' Roll Star" play like classics on first listen, and eventually went on to become familiar to millions via the numerous larger than life arena shows that Oasis quickly developed a penchant for. And let's not forget those famous antics... oh, the trashed hotel rooms, excessive drug use, and petty tabloid squabbling! While this kind of bratty behavior might be considered "punk" only at its most infantile, it was still a lot more exciting than anything crawling out of the Bowery at the time. And besides: Liam was recently named the "12th punkest person" in a BBC poll, right behind Ian MacKaye and Bill Hicks. And what could be more rebellious than succeeding in a formalized opinion poll?

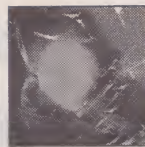
If liking these records is a crime, lock me up: A Band of Bees, *Free the Bees*; Neil Young, *After the Gold Rush*; the Exploding Hearts, *Guitar Romantic*; Screaming Weasel, *Kill the Musicians* re-issue; the DB's, *Repercussion*.



Reviewer Spotlight: Tony Stasiek (TS)

Sally Timms, *To the Land of Milk and Honey*. The second solo CD from Mekons singer Sally Timms reminds me of an oft-heard recommendation: Smile while you're speaking on the telephone, folks say, and the person on the other end of the line will notice. This advice has always bothered me. What could it mean when I'm ordering a pizza? Contesting a cell phone bill? Accusing a client of plagiarism? Hearing that smile is a distraction, and often, a clue of ignorance. When it seeps down to art, it seems to dominate country-tinged covers collections—from the works of Lambchop to Neko Case. *To the Land of Milk and Honey* is different. Timms sings stoically, like a chrome refrigerator. For one, she's British, so it might have come naturally on this 1995 release for Chicago's Feel Good All Over Records. Unlike the Velvet Underground's Nico, though, who sang as though she was trying to break our hearts, Timms is a blank slate. She exudes a similar stoic detachment on the tightened-fist chorus of Procol Harum's "Homburg" as she does describing children sent to the gallows on "Longing, Madness and Lust." You wonder: Why did she choose these songs? Does she like them? Is there something more that happened to the characters in these tracks than what she's telling us? It's intriguing, and it makes for some nicely open-ended readings of tracks by Leonard Cohen ("Half Past France"), Jackie DeShannon ("Every Time She Walks in the Room"), and Will Oldham ("No More Rides," which is equally bummed and haunting). A skilled bunch of sidemen fill in some gaps: Tortoise's John Herndon and Mekon/Waco Brother Jon Langford turn up often. The scene-stealer, though, is Jesus Lizard guitarist Duane Denison, whose jazz runs on Stuart Moxham's "It Says" is a close approximation to what angelhair pasta would sound like as a guitar solo.

Waste your time with: Cybotron, *Clear*; Exploding Hearts, *Guitar Romantic*; Dorothy Moore, *Misty Blue*; Orange Juice, *The Glasgow School*; Student Teachers, *2X5*.



REVIEWED THIS MONTH @ PUNKPLANET.COM/REVIEWS.HTML

20 Minute Loop - Yawn + House = Explosion, CD
A-Bomb Chop Shop - From the Coffin to the Rave, CDEP
A Perfect Murder - Strength Through Vengeance, CD
Abi Yoyos - This World is not my Home, 7"
Accursed Dawn - Manifest Damnation (The Creation Affect), CD
Achilles - The Dark Horse, CD
Actarus - S/T, CD
Ellen Allien - Thrills, CD
Andi Camp - Magnetic, CD
Appreciation - Healing the Fatherwound, CD-R
Apprentice, the - An American Portrait, CD
Aquabats!, the - Charge!, CD
Arl Ari - There's a new Sheriff in Town, CDEP
Arnold Jackson - Go! City, CD
As the Poets Affirm - The Jaws That Bite, the Claws That Catch, CD
Baby Teeth, the - The Baby Teeth Album, CD
Backyard Babies - Tinnitus, CD
Bailer - Sing it Like a Victim, CD
Bang! Bang! - Electric Sex, CD
Bellmer Dolls - The Diva, 7"
Betamax Format - XXX Robot / Raus Raus, 7"
Blacklist Brigade / Dead end Kids - Day's End Union, 7"
Blood In / Blood Out - Respect our Loyalty, CD
Blowtaps, the - Mad Monk Medication, 7"
Bourbon Princess - Dark of Days, CD
Brat Attack, the - From This Beauty Comes Chaos and Mayhem, CD
Bright and Hollow Sky, the - Gem State, CD
Calibretto / Mercury Radio Theater - All of These Things Do Not Belong, CD
Captain of Industry - I, CD
Carpenter Ant / Headaches - split, 7"
Catch, the - Get Cool, CD
Chin Up Chin Up - S/T, CDEP
Civet - Massacre, CD
Clara Clara - S/T, CD
Cranked Up! - This is a Weapon, CD
Crash Berlin - S/T, CD
Sally Crewe & the Sudden Moves - Shortly After Take-Off, CD
Criteria - When we Break, CD
Czolgosz / Opus Dead - Split, 7"
DJ Serious - Cold Tea, CD
Dallys, the - The Grand Resolve, CD
Daphne Loves Derby - On the Strength of All Convinced, CD
Darkest Hour - Undoing Ruin, CD
Dash Rip Rock - Recyclone, CD
Dead Letter Dept. - Rock N' Roll Hates You, CD
Decahedron - Six Songs, CD
Decomposure - At Home and Unaffected, CD
Die Alone - The Arcane Suicide Movement CD
Disengage - Application for an Afterlife, CD
Dissimiliars, the - Jimmy's Room, 7"
Divide by Zero - Answer to no One, CD
Donnybrook - Lions in This Game, CD
Drift, the - Streets / Nozomi, 12"

Dropkick Murphys - Singles Collection Volume Two, CD
Dutchmen, the - Cobretti, CDEP
Dynamite Club - It's Deeper Than Most People Actually Think, CD
Eastern Star - Get Ready to Ride Hard, CD
Ellas, Hanin - Future Noir, CD
End of the World, the - S/T, CDEP
Enemy You - Stories Never Told, CD
Engineers - S/T, CD
Eva Destruction & Her Big Band - Sing Along With Eva, CD
Evil Queens, the - First it Boils, Then it Spills, CD
Ex-Libris - Starlight Motel, CD
Excepter - Throne, CDEP
Falcon Crest - Taste the Thunder, Raise the Flag, CD
Fallin', Teri - Sun Under Me, CD
Faultlines - Travelogue, CD
Fellow Project - S/T, CD
Fels, Jerry - How to Make Enemies and Influence Strangers, CD
Fiji Mermaid - Green Pond, CD
Fire Deuce, the - Children of the Deuce, CDEP
Foetus - Love, CD
Folsom - If You're a Viper, CDEP
Four Tet - Everything Ecstatic, CD
FuckHate Propaganda / H8-Target - Split, 7"
Fugue, the - S/T, 7"
Gatsbys American Dream - Volcano, CD
Gelding, the - Thriller, 7"
Gene Defcon - Throw up & Die, CD
Get to the Chopper 7"
Gizmachi - The Imbuing, CD
Gogol Bordello - Gypsy Punks: Underdog World Strike, CD
Golden Phoenix, the - Is a Fucking Attack Machine, CD
Grey Goose - 'Til the Medicine Takes, CD
Gun Shys, the - S/T, CDEP
HO-AG/Laughing Light - Split, 7"
Happy Bullets, the - The Vice and Virtue Ministry, CD
Hexe, Ron - 1973 BC, CD
Hidden in Plain View - Life in Dreaming, CD
Hollow Points, the - The Black Spot, CD
Howard Hello - S/T, CD
Indian Jewelry - In Love With Loving, 7"
Infidel?/Castro! - Bioentropic Damage Fractal, CD
InMemory - In So Many Words, CD
Interfuse - Closed Doors Open Tracks, CD
Invisible Choir - Shades of Wonder and Lust, CD
Isobella - Surrogate Emotions of the Silverscreen, CD
J. Page - Goodbye Chapel Hill, CDEP
Jakuta and Carl - S/T, CD
Javelins - No Plants Just Animals, CD
Jim-Jims, the - Box Lunch, 7"
Jupiter Watts, the - Let it Lie, CD
Kaddistly - Buy our Intention; We'll Buy you a Unicorn, CD
Katy Mae - The Lightning and the Sun, CDEP
Kill Memory Crash - American Automatic, CD
Kimone - The Mill, CD
King Cheetah, the - The King Cheetah LP, CD

Label the Traitor - The Battle of the Common, CD
Larsen, Al - The Hardline According to Danny and the Dinosaur, CD
Lenz, Frank - Brothers who are Breathing, 7"
Loraxx - Selfis, CD
Lorenzo Goetz - Jesus Elephant, CD
Magneta Lane - The Constant Lover, CDEP
Marathon - S/T, CD
Matty Pop Chart - Good Old Water, CD
Mayday - Bushido Karaoke, CD
Megahurts, the / Sex Robots - S/T, 7"
Modern Life is War - Marshalltown, CD
Molina, Juana - Tres Cosas, CD
Monarch - S/T, CD
Morgenstern, Barbara and Robert Lippok - Tesri, CD
Morning Spy - The Silver Age, CD
Motico - You Gotta Be in it to Win, 7"
Mr. Plow - Mad Plow Disease, CD
Ms. 45 - Pop!, 7"
Narcoleptic Youth - Something Old Something New Something Borrowed, CD
Narrator, the - Such Triumph, CD
Navies - An Estate, CDEP
New Tomorrow - Hellohellowho, CD
NOFX - #2, 7"
Odiome - Heavy Wish, CD
Off with Their Heads - To Hell With This and All of You 7"
On Broken Wings - It's All a Long Goodbye, CD
One Eyed Jacks - Yarrri, CD
Online Romance, the - Hey Abraham, 7"
Oxford Collapse - A Good Ground, CD
Parlour - Hives Fives, CD
Partyline - Girls With Glasses, CDEP
Pathways, the - Productivity, 7"
Phoenix Rising, the - Lullaby, CD
Pine, the - Don't Need Regret, LP
Pistola - Hold for Bliss, CD
Planet The, the - You Absorb my Vision, CD
Populous - Queue for Love, CD
Red Death, the - External Frames of Reference, CD
Reindeer Tiger Team - S/T, 7"
Riviera - At the End of the American Century, CD
Roue - Upward Heroic Motive, CD
Silent Type, the - Of Writing / Of Violence, CD
SLA - Sonic Love Affair, CD
Sames, the - You Are the Sames, CD
Sanawon - Tiny Airplane, CD
Saxon Shore - Luck Will not Save us From a Jackpot of Nothing, CDEP
Secret Crush Society - Baltimore Chapter, CD
Self Against City - Take it How You Want It, CDEP
Science of Yabra - Bought it for a Song / Bad O Dudes, 7"
Scouts Honor - Roots in Gasoline, CD
September 10th - Fake Disaster, CD
Shadow Reichenstein - Werewolf Order, CD
Shiver - Last Rides of the Midway, CD
Siberia - Everybody Dies - Split, 7"
Sick Bees - The Marina Album, CD

Sinking Ships - Meridian, CD
Sleeping People - Sleeping People, CD
Slow Dazzle - The View From the Floor, CD
Smoke Like a Fish - Here's One We Made Earlier, CD
Soeza - Why Do You Do?, CD
Spacehorse - S/T, CDEP
Splinters - Metal Petals, CD
The Splinns - And I Know / Wild Ravin', 7"
Stars are Falling / Skylines - Split, CD
Stereovision - S/T, CD
Stolen Marches - S/T, CD
Stray From the Path - Our Oceania, CD
Strugglers, the - The Fair Store, CDEP
Subway Surfers - S/T, CDEP
Sunshine - Moonshower and Razorblades, CD
Sybris / Ten Words for Snow - Split, 7"
Takaru - S/T, 7"
Teenage Bottlerocket - Total, CD
Ten Words for Snow / Hairshirt - split 7"
These Days - Death Sentence, 7"
This Ain't Vegas - Escape / Onlookers Surround, 7"
This is Hell - S/T, 7"
Thomas Truax - Audio Addiction, CD
Tight Phantomz - Crazy When Wet, CD
Tin Horns, the - Tin Horns Present: The Champions of Victory, CD
To Kill - Watching you Fall, CD
Tractor Sex Fatality - Live it Down, 7"
Trembling, the - Art for the Masses, CD
Turnaround - S/T, CD
Ugur Dogan - Gam-i Azad, CD-R
Universal Hall Pass - Mercury, CD
Vanishing Kids - The Selfish Mirror, CD
Vibration White Finger - Five Minutes to Live, CDEP
Vinyl - LP, CD
Volebeats - Like Her, CD
Vopat - S/T, CD
Wades, the - Mr. & Mrs. Wade, CD
White Mice, the - Assphixxxeatateshun, CD
Wilderness - S/T, CD
Willowz, the - Talk in Circles, CD
The WINKS - Too Hot to be This Cool, CD
Winter Solstice - The Fall of Rome CD
With Passion - In the Midst of Bloodied Soil, CD
Wolfgang Bang - S/T, CDEP
Wolverine - The Window Purpose, CD Younger, Dulce and the Silencers - Kitty, Kitty...GROWL!, CD
Zegota - S/T, 7"
V/A - Business Deal Top 40 of 2005, CD
V/A - Leitwerk der Modernen Idiomatik, CD
VA - Look at all the Love we Found: A Tribute to Sublime, CD
V/A - Made in Holland, CD
V/A - Monosyllabic 002 Compilation, CD
V/A - Power for Passion, CD
VA - Send Ska! Hawaii's Best of 2004, CD
V/A - Unconstitutional in the USA, CD-R
V/A - {Un}Known Volume One, CD

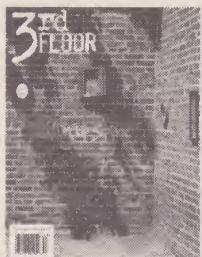
ZINES



Love, Chicago, Spring 2005

Zines that cover local color tend to act as surface hype machines, succumbing to the flash-in-the-pan din of public relations folks. "HEY! Check out this new band, but before you really get to know them, let's talk about this hot new artist that you're gonna forget about in 10 minutes because we're only going to mention their name, the date of their show, and their favorite PMS color. But before that, let me waste your time with horoscopes I made up when I was schmoozing at the latest hip bar." Especially in big cities like Chicago, zines that attempt to document the creative pulse tend to worry more about breaking news than really covering news. But it's usually the upwardly mobile scenesters that start zines like this—strictly for credibility capital, free schwa, and guest list spots. Zines like this tend to read like those crappy nightlife sections in the local paper. What's impressive about *Love, Chicago* is that it's very grounded. Sure, they cover the hip Wicker Park boutiques (Penelope's), the alternative art galleries (Foundation Gallery), the big time indie labels (Bloodshot Records), and bands that are getting more hype now than they ever did in 20 years (MOTO), but the articles are thorough, well-written, and dig deep. We don't get 50-word chats, we get lengthy conversations that do more than merely hype—they explain. The writers obviously care about their pieces, so a lot is invested in their quality. And there's something very Chicago about that. (VC)

\$5, www.lovechicago.org



3rd Floor #2

3rd Floor's aim is to publish those artists marginalized by mainstream society. Very talented artists are represented working in media such as performance, video, sculpture, photography, fine arts, and creative writing. The quality of the art in this issue of *3rd Floor* is phenomenal. As well, it is entirely less stuffy than your *Art Forum* or *Art In America*, and not in any way concerned with fashion or music. The zine is full size with color photos, includes short biographies/artist statements for each artist represented and gives minimal description/interpretation as to the artwork itself. The performance pieces in which the public is unknowingly engaged are especially memorable, with such artists as Lisa Bennett, who handed out wax-cast telephones to Chicago pedestrians, and Wayne Dunkley, who put up posters of himself, a black male, with a blank line underneath. Of course, the posters were defaced/graffiti-ed and what was written attests to the deeply embedded racism present in this country. *3rd Floor* could not be recommended enough. (AJA)

\$5, 911 St. Paul St. 3r, Baltimore, MD 21202, www.3rdfloorproject.org

9 And A Half Left #10

If I wanted to learn about dinosaurs, I'd go to the pros. The library and the Discovery Channel would both be good starting points. We all know that conveying personality through the arts can be difficult. In the case of *9 And A Half Left*, I've been left counting sheep. After scrolling past the brief section on paleontology I read up on Mike Rodemann's thoughts on fatherhood, the loss of a father, nicotine addiction and politics. I'm having some difficulty determining exactly what it is I didn't like about this zine. Sure, the blatant disregard of grammar was a wee bit irritating, but for the most part, I think the turnoffs were based in sheer boredom. I feel like I found someone's diary and there's simply not enough naughty secret telling or insight to make it any fun. The subject matter seems to be in place, but there's just not enough pep in this native Ohioan's step to keep me interested. (BM)

\$1 p/d, Mike Rodemann, 13426 Meri Ave., Lakewood, OH 44107

AK Ink #15

Here's another example of a local scene periodical that's probably only interesting to the people living within the parameters of the community. In the case of *AK Ink*, Anchorage is the city of choice. There are a few contributors, most of which could use some composition coaching. Other than the standardized band/review coverage, there are jumbled stories and an anti-hippy comic; They wear Grateful Dead shirts, you wear Dead Kennedy's shirts... you're both living in the past. (BM)

\$1, PO Box 244235, Anchorage, AK 99524, www.akink.org

Arthur #17

Arthur is like that older, more popular sibling that you really want to be like but still have your reservations about. Nevertheless, it's a music paper that is free across the US and Canada! Once you sift through all the advertising, this issue features an interview with Brian Eno; Thurston Moore and Byron Coley doing their thing, talking about obscure bands and buying records in Germany; and an article on a squatter-village in Hawaii. (AJA)

Free, www.arthurmag.com

At Both Ends #6

This mag is quickly becoming the MRR of sxe style hc in the PacNor. The interviews and content are strong now for people interested in the whole posi-thug thing. Now that it's established, I feel like the next role is to challenge the dogma and conventions of that scene. (JB)

\$3, #207-555 E. 6th Ave, Vancouver, BC, V5T 1K9 Canada

Back From Booze Hell #5

A long-running zine with big lapses between issues. Tributes to his WWF-tainted childhood, "Man from

Atlantis," and childish Pepto Dizmal-style comics. Some quick entertainment. (JB)

www.backfromboozehell.com

Bats! #1

This graphic design-intensive zine features numerous inventive collages both on the cover and throughout the zine. The major feature offers a fascinating overview of Belgian street art that includes photos of some of the more ubiquitous stencils, including a few that are unabashedly pornographic. Interviews with Pelican and Breather Resist round out the contents. (AC)

\$2.50 plus postage, Heerbaan 146, 8530 Harelbeke, Belgium, <http://www.batsmag.com>

Bike #4

Daniel is PISSED because he a fucking BIKE PUNK who hates the PIGS and drinks NATTY BOH. And boy, is he mad! Readers are treated to a trophy-worthy arrest story (via a transcribed Instant Messenger conversation), a ribbon-deserving story of getting hit by a car, and a DIY article on resizing clothes. Oh, the accomplishments we seek for those self-righteous chips on our shoulders. (VC)

\$1.50, Daniel P Shea, 1605 Park Ave. #3, Baltimore, MD 21217, bikes_up@hotmail.com

Birthdays & Christmas / Faking Distance

Each of the zines in this cut-and-paste split exist as if there wasn't a partner zine stapled to its behind. The two don't play off each other, but both are well written. *Faking Distance* is the more likeable of the two, as *Birthdays & Christmas* revolves around superficial anecdotes involving hair dye, odd crushes, and hippie parents. *Faking Distance* is more sincere, funny, engaged with its stories, and well-rounded. (AJA)

No price given, Alex Wreck, c/o Microcosm, 5307 N Minnesota Ave, Portland, OR 97217

Break The Chains #21

A radical prisoner news source with articles, updates, and continual pressures to better serve their community of political prisoners and people interested in the struggle. The writing style is somewhat dry, but this is a unique resource. (JB)

\$2, PO Box 12122, Eugene, OR 97440

Chairman of the Bored #24

Writing from Folsom State Prison, the chairmen are understandably cynical and pissed off. Unfortunately, that doesn't make this zine any more readable. While the dense, hand-done graphic design is creative and interesting, the writings lack intelligence or relevance. (LG)

\$3 or stamps, c/o Fanorama Society, 109 Arnold Avenue, Cranston RI 02905, fanoramal@aol.com

About our reviews: We make every attempt to review all the zines (or magazines) we receive, as long as they are released independently. However, despite our best efforts, not every zine ends up in here for a myriad of reasons. The zines to the left on the opening page—the ones with the magazine cover reproduced—are designated as “lead” reviews by the reviewer. That means it’s a zine that really stands out for them this time around, but certainly doesn’t mean that the many other zines reviewed aren’t good. Finally, if a reviewer doesn’t like your zine, it’s just one person’s opinion, so don’t freak out. We’re sure you put a good deal of work into your project and that alone is worth some congratulations!

This Issue’s reviewers: Abbie Amadio (AJA), Joe Biel (JB), Ari Charney (AC), Vincent Chung (VC), Lisa Groshong (LG), Liz Mason (LM), Brian Moss (BM) Edited by Emily Udell

Chicago Reporter, The, Vol. 34 #3

Dense in content and wording, the writers of the *Chicago Reporter* engage locally-based social and political stories with scrutiny and skill. The struggles of class, immigration, HIV, health care and more are all thoroughly embraced. The journalistic professionalism and educated take on humanitarian issues found in this non-profit publication are a blessing for philanthropic readers in seek of knowledge and community enlightenment. (BM)

\$5, 332 S. Michigan Ave., Ste. 500, Chicago, IL 60604, www.chicagoreporter.com

Cough #3

This slim little zine from the Bay Area is a small and odd combination of high quality drawings, record reviews, and interviews with artists and hardcore musicians. It’s well worth a buck and the few minutes it takes to peruse its 20 pages. (LG)

\$1 or trade, Tina Long, PO Box 604, Moss Beach, CA 94038, coughzine@yahoo.com, www.coughzine.tk

Cubby Missalette #17

This issue opens with a cease-and-desist letter resulting from the zine’s unauthorized appropriation of the “Missalette” trademark from a religious periodicals company. The devolution into high weirdness continues as one article chronicles a couple’s preparation of a placenta for consumption. Apparently that involves cutting the “meat” into thin strips as if for a stir-fry, then drying it slowly in a cast iron pot over a fire, and finally grinding it into powder. Another article describes the erstwhile California pastime of “bou-tiqueing”: in a 1980s version of Tupperware parties, housewives hosted get-togethers to trade homemade giftbaskets of the Pepperidge Farm variety. The narrator’s sister was especially gifted at this craft, and the family only later discovers that she was able to accommodate her deluge of orders through a speed addiction. The “zine within a zine” is literally a miniature zine stapled within the larger zine. It’s a charming surprise, even though much of the poetry that comprises its contents is disappointing. The random aspect of this zine’s offerings is rounded out with a one page comic portraying a melancholy “Goth Moth” that muses, “I’m a pathetic husk of a life” before suffering the indignities of a bug zapper. (AC)

Free, 1172 Florida St., San Francisco, CA 94110

Dagger #36

If you love reviews, *Dagger* is the zine for you—more than half of this substantial publication is record reviews from a variety of contributors. A portion of the pages are reserved for rambling band interviews in which the speakers are often unidentified. (LG)

\$3.50, Tim Hinely, Box 820102, Portland, OR 97282-1102, daggerboy@prodigy.net, www.indiepages.com/dagger

El Loco #1

Jim, you’re a grown man. You should know better than to Xerox your rag in 14 point font onto 8 x 11 sheets of paper. The amount of blank space you’ve created is catastrophic. I’d also like to think you’re capable of finding a more efficient binding method than a single staple in the upper left corner. Are you making zines or initiating a tree holocaust in the form of a 2nd grade book report? (BM)

\$2, c/o Jim, 546 S. Park Ave., Apt. D, Medford, WI 54451

Eulogy For The Locust: Layers Magazine Pocket Book Series #4

If the image design and scattered poetry in the *Layers Magazine Pocket Book Volumes* were located on a mediocre emo-core band t-shirt and/or album insert, it’d be far more tolerable than it is in paper press format. It’s obvious that Brian is thinking, caring, and trying, but his efforts need guidance. “Sometimes it gets so lonely, but it is what it is and nothing much more / just tear drops and glasses half full” – Insert chug mosh breakdown here. (BM)

\$2, *Layers Magazine*, c/o Brian Bush, 15140 Evergreen Dr. Apt. 3D, Orland Park, IL 60462, six66punk@aol.com

Freezer Burn #1

I love hand-colored covers! This means the person has a lot of time on their hands. Six pages in, and Ben is still writing about how he really doesn’t have a point to this. He explains his lack of an artistic statement. And then he says it again, but in different words. It goes on for awhile. A half-assed disclaimer of nonchalant indifference is really a self-aware gesture of insecurity meant to mask the well-done comics, juvenile ranting, and further exploration into a St. Louis teenage mind. Anti-social awkwardness aside, Ben’s creative urgency does shine through and I want to reassure him that: Yes, his work is highly enjoyable. Yes, his introspective observations are normal—even insightful. Yes, he might even have a giant monster truck dick that will do him a lot of good later in life. What I’m trying to say to Ben is that he shouldn’t hold back and he should keep making more zines without being a weenie about it. They’re worth reading, I promise. (VC)

\$1, Ben’s Industries, 4131 Hickory Hill Dr., St. Louis, MO 63129, driedgum@aol.com

Flake’s #2

This prison zine, handwritten in newsletter format, provokes a profound feeling of “ugh.” The author seems to believe his stories are compelling (He got drunk once! He touched his cousin’s boob!), but they’re just sad. And as much as I love Prince, is there any redeeming value in transcribing “Little Red Corvette”? (LG)

Two stamps, c/o Fanorama Society, 109 Arnold Avenue, Cranston, RI 02905, fanoramal@aol.com

Future Belongs To Ghosts #3

A collage version featuring images from the first two issues coinciding with a display show of his work. Charcoal drawings of old pained emo boys from the pages of *Heartattack* and an essay on punk by a graduate student. Having lived through the last ten years of DIY punk as well, I’m left scratching my head. Is this zine relevant? It’s what I’ve always asked for, but do I really care? Is it anything those of us from this scene don’t already know? Is it just intended for academics? What do I do with it after I read it and look at the pictures? Terence Hannum clearly belongs to the art world judging by the way he titles his pieces. Perhaps he’ll show new people the value and merit of DIY punk. (JB)

\$2, Terence Hannum, PO Box 220651, Chicago, IL 60622

Green Anarchy #20

Green Anarchy just keeps looking and reading better over the years. Delving into a loose theme of spirituality, its focus forms the best issue yet. Well-researched and informative articles smash the idea of monotheism, discuss existential issues, and cover direct action from all over the globe. (VC)

\$4, PO Box 11331, Eugene, OR 97440, collective@greenanarchy.org

In The Weather: Self-Guided Walks/Chicago

DIY cartography is where it’s at. Here’s 16 creative approaches to sightseeing, the best one being the “teenage angst walk” wherein one chants, “I hate them. I wish they were dead.” Even if you’re not in Chicago, it’s worth the read if you can get your paws on it. (LM)

[No price given], www.intheweather.org, submit@intheweather.org

Jerk Magazine, Vol. III, Issue 6

While this well-written issue is billed as a “music special edition,” it meanders from music to swing clubs, housing discrimination, and local politics, while claiming that “the pulse of the Syracuse music scene is fading,” and harping on the lack of decent venues and bands in town. (LG)

[No price given], 126 Schline Student Center, Syracuse, NY 13244, jerkmag@hotmail.com, www.jerkmag.com

Jinxremoving #10

Aside from the tacky title reference, *Jinxremoving* is a firmly illustrated, semi-amusing comic with a peculiar and informative cast of characters. Outside of the graphics, the story lines don’t have enough potency or wit to hold up on their own, but, all in all, the strips have a fun, quick and easy feel to them. (BM)

[No price given], Arpad Crisis, 5818 N. Ridge Ave. Apt #2F, Chicago, IL 60660, www.forp.net/jinxremoving

Junket #2

A surprising and engaging guidebook to the types of taxi customers in Pittsburgh, *Junket* is a bargain at

\$3. Justin’s well-written and profoundly sad stories profile people across the gamut of human tragedy, from a hooker dashing home to pay the babysitter to Barry Bonds giving a 24 tip. (LG)

\$3, Justin Cummings, P.O. Box 7183, Pittsburgh, PA 15213, justin@crucialunit.com

LA Scene Reporter #15, 16

A thorough listing of upcoming shows and events in LA, from rental halls to speakers to club listings. I really respect the style and excitement here as I really feel like the authors care and attend all of these events. (JB)

Free, Nick G, c/o Libros Revo, 312 W 8th St. Los Angeles, CA, 90014

List #6 / Bike, #5

This quarter-size, split zine was put together by an obviously in love boyfriend-girlfriend duo. It got overly cutesy at times, though it is nice to see two people so genuinely happy, even if that means they draw little pictures of each other, labeling the parts that make the other one so lovable. Both zines come together to do a “comics issue.” The comics are well-drawn and the writing/list-making goes from the socially charged (*Bike*) to the lighthearted contentment of list-making (*List*). It isn’t their intention, but it seems the duo is solely writing/drawing for each other. (AJA)

[No information given]

Living Proof #4: Rehearsal

Andrew is all over *Living Proof*, “mentally masturbating” on subjects all relevant (irrelevant?) to life. From his theorizing on surrealistic art in a museum exhibit to melodramatically musing on success to love, his childhood and politics, Andrew doesn’t leave a stone unturned. *Living Proof* is intelligently written, sincere, easy to relate to, and filled with nostalgic yarns, though it is an exhausting read for one afternoon. (AJA)

\$3 ppd, Andrew, PO Box 14211, Chicago, IL 60614, www.atm4.net, livingproof@atm4.net

Maxxxzine #2

This lame excuse for a zine is noteworthy for its truly heroic number of typos and misspellings. The content consists of circa-1989 stories dredged out a closet and entire articles photocopied out of other magazines. While there are some interesting (original?) photos, nothing about this zine makes it worth two bucks. (LG)

\$2, PO Box 682, Fairfax, CA 94978

ZINES

Media Whore #5

A lower-fi version of *Bitch Magazine*, this issue critiques popular culture from a feminist angle. However, this is a black-and-white, safety-pinned, Xeroxed number. Toilet trip length essays make it an easy read. (LM)
[No price given], 12 B Wolcott Street, Malden, MA 02148, www.mediawhorezine.com

Mind Clutter #2

This first person diary-style narrative describes a high schooler's night out with an old friend for sushi, tagging, and a hardcore show. The narrator later embarks on an interesting digression on how her various pop culture inspired preconceptions of high school ultimately did not jibe with its disappointing reality. (AC)
\$1 plus 1 stamp or trade, PO Box 800757, Santa Clarita, CA 91380-0757

Pocketful Of Change

A relatively unexciting punk magazine with uninteresting interviews with potentially interesting people. I was impressed by the young wisdom of DEK, though most of the contents here aren't quite developed yet. (JB)
Free, 1005 N. 36 St. #2, Seattle, WA 98103

Proof I Exist #6

For better or worse, the errors and small wonders that folks make while pushing through their days fascinate me. Sometimes the lives we can't call our own captivate our interests, because they work outside of our boundaries and control. I'm often a sucker for zines that summarize, with wondrous ease, someone's personal style of living. Reading Billy's work makes me think of sharing a snowy park bench with a good friend who's got a knack for spinning simple endeavors into warming tell tales. (BM)
[No Price Given], c/o Billy 1357 W. Augusta #1, Chicago, IL 60622, billy@fastworks.com

Ranting And Raving

Crooked, yet forgettable poetry interspersed with half-toned images of unrecognizable things. I like walking the streets and dumpster diving as much the next person, but I don't need to read poetry about it. (JB)
\$1, Luke Rollins, 228 Ernie Ave., New Albany, IN 47150

Razorcake #22

The columns in this issue actually overshadow the interviews with bands like the Marked Men. One columnist describes her family's encounter with the Night Stalker, the AC/DC inspired serial killer who terrorized Los Angeles during the summer of 1985. Another columnist reflects on his time as an altar boy under a priest who was only recently charged as a pedophile. (AC)
\$4, PO Box 42129, Los Angeles, CA 90042, www.razorcake.com

Razorcake #24

Another fine effort of this regularly scheduled newsprint punk zine/magazine with interviews, rants, reviews, and columns with titles like "I Hate a Parade." Whether you've heard of the bands in here or not, the writing is solid: testy, witty, and fun. This issue: Smalltown, Von Iva, and more. (LM)
\$4, PO Box 42129, Los Angeles, CA 90042, www.razorcake.com

Rebel Stew #2

Though this anarchist journal decided to eschew its original title *Tyrannicide* in favor of the friendlier appellation *Rebel Stew*, its polemical rants are no less angry and paranoid. For instance, one article imploring readers to avoid military service implies that all who serve will inevitably become murderers, torturers, and rapists. (AC)
[No price given], 2925 Lawrence Dr., Falls Church, VA 22042

Rise And The Fall, The, #4

One could pick up this San Pedro zine for the decent interviews and articles on skaters and bands, but you really want this for the conversation between Mike Watt and Charles Bukowski's widow, Linda Lee Bukowski. It's a solid read, giving an intimate portrait of the writer. From an interview with Manic Hispanic to an homage to 673 to a talk with filmmaker Craig Flipy, this small unit packs a good load of solid coverage. (VC)
\$2, PO Box 1794, San Pedro, CA 90733-1794, www.theriseandthefall.com

Rolling Thunder #1: An Anarchist Journal Of Dangerous Living

As much as I rolled my eyes at the recurring themes and images here, I still kept picking it up. I didn't need to hear how the fictional office worker got liberated to encourage me. Yet I read most articles from beginning to end. Much of the content is taken from other sources, presumably without asking. Crimethinc is relevant as a social experiment in the punk community, and also because it offers new life options to teenage suburban kids. These are its strong points. While there are scores of problems in their literature, that is not unique to Crimethinc. It's not a bible. Don't take everything from it verbatim; take bits and pieces. Pick some ideas from it to apply to your own life. (JB)
\$5, Crimethinc, Far East, PO Box 1963, Olympia, WA 98507, www.crimethinc.com

Rule Out The Mutilated Shadow #5

This zine defies categorization with a 25-track CD-R compilation and numerous deranged drawings and absurdist comics interspersed throughout. My favorite one page comic depicts a depressive but personable robot that feels shame enough after pleasuring itself (don't ask) that it contemplates "robocide." Another comic begins, "Tim sure did have some nice tits." (AC)
[No price given], 4868 Holly Park Ave. SE, Kentwood, MI 49548, ellizabethchavez@yahoo.com

Sample #4

I don't know if the Dallas/Fort Worth scene is tiny, or if the editor generally includes her friends in her zine. We have interviews with local indie and country bands (Hyperbubble, The Happy Bullets, and The Deathray Davies), a page about Jennifer's recent MySpace friends, and a spread about Jennifer's birthday party. I feel like I crashed the party and didn't bring extra beer. Wait, do I know you? Fuck. (VC)
\$2 ppd, Sample Press, PO Box 471159, Fort Worth, TX 76147

Sample #5

Articles, interviews, and album and show reviews related to Fort Worth, TX's prolific music scene, reading like a chatty inter-office newsletter in its friendliness:

"...The love of music that made them pick up and party in the first place is still there, alive and kicking ass." Isn't that cute? (LM)
No price given, Sample Press, PO Box 471159, Fort Worth, TX 76147, info@samplepress.com

Sanitary and Ship

This Chicago-based literary magazine is one angry piece(s) of work. 90% of the essays are rambling political rants that will offer little insight to the average *Punk Planet* reader, except if you're into tidbits of Chicago's local color. Surprisingly, the piece I liked the most was Rachel Slager's emotionally resonant story about her, which was a fresh breath from the ineffectual pissed off soapboxing. (VC)
Free, Diatribe Media Productions, www.diatribemedia.com

Satellite, The, Vol. 4, #5

The *Satellite* keeps the formula similar to hundreds of other local-alternative newspapers around the country. You have your liberal columnists, your weekly/monthly calendars, and your reviews section. You also have your feature articles, especially useful was the how-to on getting arrested, what to and what not to say, and especially non-useful was the how-to-make-it-in-the-independent-music-scene article, which was neither enlightening nor funny. (AJA)
Free, *Satellite Magazine*, PO Box 2823, Gainesville, FL 32602, www.satellitemag.com

Satellite, The, Vol. 4, #6

Known for backwoods draws, bathtub meth and old timers, Northern Florida is a region in which the liberally inclined are sorely outnumbered. Luckily, the *Satellite* is readily available and free of charge for the townie progressives and underdogs in the sticks. Thorough in its coverage of arts and culture, distinguished in its layout and design, The *Satellite*'s diverse palette offers up something for everyone. (BM)
Free, *Satellite Magazine*, PO Box 2823, Gainesville, FL 32602, www.satellitemag.com

Satellite, The, Vol. 4, #7

Does anybody know where I might find information about a Dave Mathews tribute band in the greater Gainesville region? I've been looking EVERYWHERE. Oh! Here we are! Thank god! I've really been holding out for a North Central Florida community paper. Phew! (LM)
Free, *Satellite Magazine*, PO Box 2823, Gainesville, FL 32602, www.satellitemag.com

Shovel Bum Presents Exxtreme Archaeology #10

Dig this David Collier-like presentation of true life via comics instead of just straight text, the topic specifically being archaeology. This is way more compelling than some lame-o Harper's feature by David Foster Wallace dipping his toe in an Alaskan puddle and stream-of-consciousnessing it up for the "cool" kids to go ga-ga over. (LM)
[No price given], Trent de Boer, 1805 Steele Street SE, Olympia, WA 98501, dutchcircus@hotmail.com

Signal to Noise #38

This "journal of improvised and experimental music" is an outstanding resource for those interested in exploring unconventional sounds. Though some

of their writers suffer an addiction to polysyllabism, their occasionally impenetrable prose only marginally detracts from fascinating interviews with Four Tet, Rob Sonic, Saul Williams, and others. (AC)
\$4.95, PO Box 585 Winooski, VT 05404, www.signaltonoise.com

Slug, Vol. 16, #197

Though this eclectic magazine focuses on Salt Lake City (*Slug* stands for Salt Lake Underground), even non-Utahans might marvel at the diversity of content. This issue includes a profile of a local belly dancer, an interview with 80s electronic popsters Erasure, and an SLC cabbie's account of a coke-addled fare who actually dug his Propagandhi cassette. (AC)
Free, 351 Pierpont Ave., Ste. 4B, Salt Lake City, UT 84101, www.slugmag.com

Slug, Vol. 16, #199

Salt Lake's *Slug* does a good job of balancing local and national interests. Primarily grounded in musical happenings, the July issue spotlights a couple of native up-and-comings and features lukewarm interviews with Throw Rag, the Epoxies, David Pajo and Jimmy La Valle. Most major cities in America have prints comparable to *Slug*; they're nothing to kick and scream about, but they keep the masses well informed. (BM)
Free, *Slug Mag*, 351 W. Pierpont Ave., Ste. 4B, Salt Lake City, UT 84101 www.slugmag.com

Time Enough At Last: A Reading Log 2004

AJ Michel, editor of *Low Hug* zine, writes about popular culture with articulate amusement. Every zine, comic, and book she read in the past year is reviewed here. Leave it on your kitchen table to read during your bowl of corn flakes instead of studying the cereal box. (LM)
\$1.00, AJ Michel, 112 Muir Ave., PMB 1057, Hazleton, PA 18201, lowhug@yahoo.com

Wintu: A Life In Parts

The author plans to compile future issues of this zine into an autobiography. Why? I wondered. Her life doesn't seem any more interesting than anybody I know. Then I got sucked in like it was a scrapbook, enthralled to see when her adult teeth came in. Oh, I see. It's in the details. (LM)
Sample Press, J. Farley, PO Box 471159, Fort Worth, TX 76147, buffy2473@charter.net

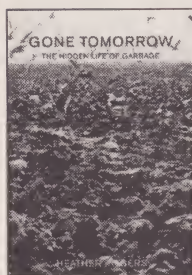
Wonka Vision, #27

This is the first issue of *Wonka Vision* in which they display their new format: glossy, color. Jimmy Eat World appears on the cover, and there are interviews (that could have been less predictable) with the Explosion, Rise Against, Strung Out, and Sage Francis. (AJA)
\$2.95, PO Box 63680, Philadelphia, PA 19147, www.wonkavision-magazine.com

Xenophobe Magazine, #3

Xenophobe could be a lot heavier on the content. Despite being the "music issue," the articles are sparse, and most appear written because, well, there was nothing else to write about. However, this issue comes with a sampler CD, which is way meatier than the zine itself, although that isn't saying much. (AJA)
2, PO Box 30484, Winston-Salem, NC 27130, xenophobemag@yahoo.com

BOOKS



Gone Tomorrow: Hidden Life of Garbage
Heather Rogers
New Press

Garbage: in a strange way, looking through someone's garbage will tell you much more about who they are than they may be willing to admit: what they eat, what they buy, what they believe. In *Gone Tomorrow*, filmmaker Heather Rogers uses spirited research to combat contemporary ideas about how we handle disposal.

What was the most surprising thing you learned about our history of disposal?

Perhaps the most surprising thing I found was how common the reuse of discarded materials was in the past. In the 19th century, all types of substances were repaired, re-made, and re-circulated; very little was considered to no longer have value. In the early decades of the 20th century, there was municipal composting in the US, as well as feeding organic wastes to hogs at publicly owned farms. Also, households used to routinely sort their discards. Many people think of such practices as new; it says a lot about where our society has gone in the intervening years that, for example, a municipal composting program today seems cutting edge.

What is planned obsolescence?

Understanding planned obsolescence is key to understanding our high garbage output today. Manufacturers design commodities that aren't meant to last, which keeps people buying more. There's essentially two types of built-in obsolescence: fashion and technological. Fashion obsolescence means that producers regularly market new colors and styles, whether it's cars, clothing or dish soap. If you don't have the latest look or the hottest brand, then you're a loser. There are also the technological advances that render older products inferior or, sometimes, impossible to continue using. This is most apparent today with computers and cell phones. The fact that today it's cheaper to buy a new DVD player than to repair one that's malfunctioning tells us that planned obsolescence has been a huge success for capital. They have managed to devise a system that's intensely wasteful in the service of generating ongoing consumption and booming profits. It's worth noting that not only does this mode of production externalize costs onto the environment—in the form of greater raw materials extraction to make all those commodities that then just get trashed, and in the form of disposal sites—it also represents labor that's sacrificed to the garbage graveyard.

Why won't standard recycling practices solve the garbage problem?

First, it's important to say that recycling is worth doing. But the technological barrier to recycling being a realistic long-term solution is what's called "downcycling." The simple explanation is that each time materials are reprocessed, they begin to break down on the molecular level. Paper fibers get shorter, glass and plastic molecules grow less stable. As a result, like with plastic, lots of virgin resin must be added so the recycled substance can have an industrial use. For now there are no real remedies for this. —Joe Meno

Barney's Crew
Sean Carswell
Gorsky Press

You know the guy at your neighborhood bar who, especially after downing a few beers, really get into his stories? I mean, gets off the stool and gestures wildly into air, his face turning red, tapping you on the shoulder, bringing you right into the story, while a small crowd has gathered around to hear every word, even if they've heard it before. You know that guy? That's the charm of Sean Carswell. And the pieces in this collection are the ones you're jostling at the bar to hear.

Each one of these stories has a stripped down, honest, straightforward voice that you know is taking you somewhere you want to go. And although the people vary in age, sex, and class (which, by the way, I haven't seen much of in a short story collection) they all seem to share a certain kind of loneliness that comes, not out of any fear or disdain for other people, but rather a thoughtful compassion for the rest of the world. In the title story, a group of construction workers descend upon a car dealership for just the briefest moment of payback after being exposed to too many of its annoying radio commercials, including one heard over the loudspeakers of a strip club. In another, a high school girl hitchhikes her way to a certain disappointment. In a lot of the stories, there is a quiet moment of contentment, even amid the screaming, heartbreak and soon-to-be incarceration. These are the blue collar workers, questioning college students, baseball fans and desperate, confused teenagers we've all been. So please...grab a goddamn drink and listen to them. You won't be disappointed. —Jimmy Vickery

Nerd Girl Rocks Paradise City: A True Story of Faking It in Hair Metal L.A.

Anne Thomas Soffee
Chicago Review Press

There are memoirs and there are books about rock 'n' roll, but when was the last time you read a truly well-written rock'n'roll memoir? Was it written by a dame? Did she do a fine job weaving funny scenes and biting commentary around serious ideas like love, addiction, and the '92 LA riots? And while she's sarcastic about a lot of things, was she really, earnestly, endearingly serious in her love of hair bands, so much so that you cheer for her when she moves from Richmond Virginia to Los Angeles just in time to catch the last glorious days before everybody started covering their leopard-spot spandex with oversized flannels? If you're nodding, is it because you've already read this book that I'm reviewing here?

The trip to LA makes for a good read, in a get-

ting-to-know your author, hey, I grew up in (or on) that band/writer/city/drink, too, way. Once Soffee makes it to her seedy efficiency apartment just off Hollywood Boulevard, though, that's where the real and emotional guts of the story lie. L.A. is where she abuses her substances, pursues her rock-reporting dreams, and gets to know a whole spectrum of folks who mostly aren't getting what they wanted out of the place, either. L.A.'s also where all but one of her Glenn Danzig encounters occur.

Of her choice, at 23, to devote herself to the metal scene, Soffee reflects "I thought I was going to take rock'n'roll journalism by storm. Instead, the only thing I've taken by storm is a dive bar full of men in dresses." This book has a lot of attitude but it's never maudlin and doesn't fake it. Like her idol Lester Bangs, Soffee writes with all the swagger and rhythm of the best rock'n'roll. Her writing shows evidence of a smart mouth and a big heart and documents the time in her life when very big hair completed the package. —Meredith Grah

Spy's Fate

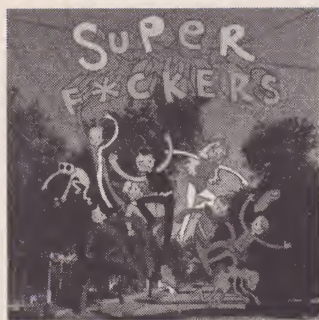
Arnaldo Correa
Akashic Books

Who doesn't love a spy? In the neighborhood I grew up in, there were at least three different dubhouses devoted solely to spying. Spies are good subjects, and that's the number one reason this book worked for me.

Carlos Manuel is the spy we meet and follow around in Arnaldo Correa's novel *Spy's Fate*. He is a longtime Cuban Intelligence agent whose world seems to be falling apart when we encounter him. Not long after returning from a mission in Africa, our hero's wife kills herself and he realizes his kids are sick of him. Time to head for the good ole U.S. of A., he decides, and that's where it gets interesting. As soon as Carlos (or Roberto as his alias reads) arrives in the US both the CIA and the Cubans want desperately to catch him. The chase is on.

Correa provides us with all the usual cloak and dagger elements we love in a good spy novel. There are tons of disguises, high tech equipment, a little vigilante justice, and even a true Lex Luther type character for our hero to face off with. Here Lex comes in the form of a CIA agent named King and seeks revenge on our hero for literally blowing his manhood off years back in a bombing attempt. Beyond all the plot devices, Correa's novel is a constant political commentary on the intelligence war between the U.S. and Cuba, a tragic comedy of personal vendettas between uncompromising extremists that would be much funnier if I did not believe it to be true. —Robert Bzrieki

COMICS



Super F*ckers

There was a time when the cartoonist James Kochalka was an adorable, irreverent, boisterous fellow filled with good cheer and an unassuming charm. But something switched up when Kochalka took to detailing every day of his life with his deliberately trivial *Sketchbook Diaries*: his charm adopted a formula. A four-panel, overly cutesy formula that bored new readers and quickly

wore on old ones. And since they were all about the cartoonist himself—and his cat, and his lamp, and his friends, and his wife—you could rather grow to hate the guy, and the guy's work, pretty quickly. *Super F*ckers*, however, is a return to all that Kochalka was. Based on the tales of a band of wacky superfriends with special powers and talents (Plant Pal and Rocket-power, Superleaf, Computer Fist) and hinging upon the events that took place the weekend of the team try-outs, Kochalka's one-off heroes have concerns more real than *Spider-Man 2* ever did: they want to open up new vortices so they can stick their dicks in them. The jokes may rely a too heavily on inappropriate language for costumed superheroes, and the color may remind readers more of Kochalka's youth-friendly work, but *Super F*ckers* is a friendly riot. Adorable, irreverent, boisterous, filled with good cheer and an unassuming charm—and swearsy as all get-out—*Super F*ckers* will bring Kochalka fans back in droves. (AEM)

\$7, James Kochalka, Top Shelf Productions, www.topshelfcomix.com
\$5, www.lovechicago.org

Amazing Rain

This is a very sweet book. Brown uses a simple illustration style and a probing voice to intimate a relationship between anxiety and affection. It isn't a comic by any definition, despite the claim that it's form is "outside the established conventions" of the comic arts. But it is a wonderful grown-up picture book, perhaps in the tradition of Edward Gorey. Regardless, as it's own piece of art it is a really lovely examination of the lonely heart, and the perils of loving attachment in a distracted modern culture. The way the pictures play off of the simple text creates a well-balanced tension that is fragile and emotive. (JH)

\$24.95, Sam Brown, Soft Skull Press, www.softskull.com, ISBN 1-932360-50-6

Duppy, Zombre vs. Slappy: Megathunder Showdown

Various stories, many about a well-meaning zombie who, due to his decomposed flesh, only instills fear and causes trouble. Despite Purins's winning illustrations, the pages are cluttered and the often-wordless panels frequently fail to coherently relay the narrative. (CB)

\$2 each, Ansis Purins, 14 Saxon Rd., Newton, MA 02467, www.ansis.info, ans40@lycos.com

Headstatic

This book earned a well-deserved Xeric Grant. It is a showcase of Hacker's work, which is often very good. There is a fresh and innocent attitude to his comics. Hacker employs much shameless experimentation with style, but at least he puts it all out there. Regular readers of comics will recognize the origins of his homage works, and some of the tribute pieces are obvious to a kid. Hacker gets credit for culling from almost every visual source ever—and using it abundantly. But it is the more aphoristic and the experimental works that are most refreshing. "Chaps Are Funny," "A Story To Tell," "If I Only Had A Face," "Heaven's Prisoners" . . . it's little pieces like these in which we see Hacker's real talent. There is such diversity in the book there is little room for general observation other than to say they're good. There is no continuity to the overall presentation, but that's part of the charm. And while the longer pieces are often sophomoric, there is enough decent material in here to really enjoy. (JH)

[No price given], Jay A. Hacker III, Fool's Child Comix, 524 Sunview Dr., Athens, TN 37303, www.foolschildcomix.com

Hi-Horse Omnibus

In terms of numbers of great comics in one collection, *Hi-Horse Omnibus* is possibly one of the best anthologies of the year. I'll admit I came late to the *Hi-Horse* party: The drawing style and stories I first

came across several years ago seemed too deliberately weird, too strong of a reaction against what was being put out in New York or Seattle. In that time, though, the *Hi-Horse* gang has honed the quirkiness and concentrated on the narrative, affording this fantastic collection of charming, well-told tales that are still some of the weirdest stories going. (AEM)

Various, Alternative Comics, www.indyworld.com, ISBN 1891867679

Jinxremoving #8: Short Stories

Efforts to chronicle the minutiae of Crisis's daily life are derailed by nagging questions about the viability and purpose of writing diary-form zines. Plowing straight through meta-narrative, *Jinx* lands squarely in the sand trap of naval gazing. The drawings are cool, and this is far from terrible but should be much better. (CB)

\$1 or trade, Arpad Crisis, 5818 N. Ridge, Apt. 2F, Chicago, IL 60660

Jokester Magazine #1

This collection of joke cartoons occasionally earns a chuckle, but it needs some work. It would be great for jokey kids, but it's a bit too mature. (JH)

\$2.99, Mike Arnold & Marten Jalled, Tool/Thwak/Jokester Publications, 224 Oakland Rd., Maplewood, NJ 07040, jokestermag@verizon.net

Long Live My Love/My Love Is Dead

With his clean lines, robots, and penchant for literary criticism, Paul Hornschemeier can't escape the inevitable Chris Ware comparisons. Being able to craft something that evokes echoes of Jimmy Corrigan is, in itself, an accomplishment, but it must be a difficult burden for Hornschemeier to bear. Who wants to be held to such an unattainable standard? Despite his Warian style, Hornschemeier has created something uniquely his own with *My Love Is Dead* / *Long Live My Love* (a double book that requires some flipping on the part of the reader). Where Ware often wallows in self reference, Hornschemeier creates clever and memorable characters. It's good stuff. (DCE)

\$10.95, V/A, Absence of Ink Publishers, ISBN 0-9742468-0-8

Luba #9

Luba has horrifically large breasts. Better suited for the niche porn market than for an indie comic book, they protrude from her chest and descend to waist level. When drawn in profile, she looks as though she's carrying a watermelon. Fans of the Hispanic/lesbian narratives made famous by Los Bros. Hernandez will undoubtedly find Luba a rewarding read. The rest of us, however, won't be able to get our minds off those massive boobs. How does she walk? Does she suffer from chronic back pain? (DCE)

\$3.50 + \$1 postage and handling, Gilbert Hernandez, Fantagraphics, 7563 Lake City Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115

About our reviews: We review independently produced comics. It's true. We do it for the love of reading them and for the love of writing about them. We don't care whether or not you buy them based on our reviews, but we will make every effort to give you what information we can about the comics we review that are available for sale. We review comics that are put out by the small publishing houses, comics that are put out by small art collectives, and comics that are put out by individuals. We'll try to review every comic we get in-house, but sometimes that's just not possible. Sorry.

This issue's reviewers: Ari Charney (AC), Chris Burkhalter (CB), Dave Elfving (DCE), James Hosticka (JH), Anne Elizabeth Moore (AEM) Edited by Emily Udell

Muzzlers, Guzzlers and Good Yeggs

This small book contains illustrated biographical narratives (it's not a comic) of four legendary American criminals. Save the one autobiography, the other three show Coleman's research as that of an empathetic obsessive. And Coleman's illustrations, in their dark, detailed obsession, dig not just into the bottom of the people in the stories, but uncomfortably tap into a wickedness inside all people. Coleman is not only very skilled at showing man is an essentially bent creature; like Faulkner, Hurston, Poe and other great American authors, Coleman swims in the loneliness at the bottom of historical American culture. But among the vilest of scenes, occasionally Coleman shows that the tiniest hints of grace and relief, though they are a far reach, are available—sometimes. For example, surrounded by all the wickedness of this book, it is an act of kindness that moves the heart of serial criminal Jack Black. This is definitely not a book that glamorizes crime, or makes violence in any way interesting or appealing. This book is about the potential horror of being human, and it takes four real life criminals in Coleman's hands to show us as much. (JH)

\$13, Joe Coleman, Fantagraphics, ISBN 156097628-4

Passing Periods: Tackling Tough Topics for Today's Troubled Teens

This shoddily drawn mini contains one of the funniest exchanges of dialogue ever committed to paper: "Mom, will you go to the prom with me?" "Dream on, DORK." Similar exchanges drive every strip in the book, mainly comprised of three-panel joke gags culled from every high-school adolescent's repository of one-liners. Even for five-minute comics these are poorly executed, but no one who picks it up is going to stop laughing long enough to complain. (AEM)

Joe Sayers, www.jsayers.com

The Pin-up Art Of Dan DeCarlo

I was only nine years old when I read my first Archie comic book. While the teenagers of Riverdale were almost irredeemably wholesome, I found something about them vaguely disturbing. I figured it out when I was 12. Betty and Veronica are really, really hot. And though it was never discussed openly, Archie could've fucked both of them if he'd wanted to. The thought had me furiously trying to erase bikini tops and miniskirts. An effort that resulted in little more than torn pages and unsightly white blotches. Had I access to vintage pinup mags like *Gee Whiz* and *Humorama*, however, I'd have been able to better realize some of those blonde and brunette fantasies. For while he was drawing Archie, Dan DeCarlo was

also drawing buxom women in compromising positions. More often than not, they bore a striking resemblance to the belles of Riverdale. The single panel gags assembled by Alex Chun and Jacob Covey for Fantagraphics are tame by today's standards. Still, for a chance to see the exploits of an adult and sexually liberated Veronica, it's an entirely worthwhile collection. (DCE)

\$18.95, Alex Chun, Jacob Covey, eds., Fantagraphics Books, ISBN 156097619-5

Plastic Farm #9: Fallout Shelter

Despite the inclusion of a detailed backstory inside the front cover, new readers will be utterly baffled by the story line. The disappointingly scratchy style of the artwork in the opening and closing pages shifts during a flashback sequence to a far more pleasing, cleaner, almost caricature style, with grayed out tones that enhance the noir atmosphere. (AC)

\$2.95, Rafer Roberts, Wendi Strang-Frost, Plastic Farm, www.plasticfarm.com

Project: Superior

Unfortunately for the several anthologies that have come out in the last few years featuring hip artists taking on the supes—whether traditional heroes or merely the tropes they are bound by—parodies of genres too often do nothing to break away from the genre themselves. Which problem generally leaves otherwise fantastic artists forced to design a really great new way of filling a page with the word "Thwack!" *Project: Superior* does little to break the rules set by the supes, and what could be a compelling collection of the next wave of comics artists in a high-quality volume is instead a collection of jokes about superheroes who actually have to tie their shoes! Or forget to lock the door behind them when they go out to solve crimes! The pieces that refrain from falling into wholly predictable patterns are notable (Martin Cendreda, Tara McPherson, Scott Campbell, Megan Whitmarsh), but if you don't live and breath superheroes, you won't be get pulled into this anthology. (AEM)

\$19.95, Adhouse Books, www.adhousebooks.com

Pyongyang: A Journey in North Korea

While most graphic novels by animators seem too polished, cutesy, and well-timed for my passion-over-technique tastes, Guy DeLisle's experiences traveling in North Korea (at least, as they are recorded in this travelogue) give him more grit than most slicked-up books of their kind. It works: DeLisle's grimy restaurant meals, barely concealed revulsion over local politics, and solitary, government-enforced boredom almost demand the thin veil of practiced Saturday-morning cartoon techniques he occasionally comes close to

employing. This fantastically rendered look into a culture we rarely get to see ourselves is drawn vibrantly, beguilingly, and even readers just looking for a good story will be thrilled by it. (AEM)

\$19.95, Guy DeLisle, Drawn & Quarterly

Strange Day

A comic about weepy teenage Cure fans on a heart-crossed adventure. Definitely a little dorky, but it isn't pretentious, so that leaves it some charm. (JH)

\$3.95, Damon Hurd, Tatiana Gill, Alternative Comics, 503 NW 37th Ave., Gainesville, FL 32609-2204

Temporary #2: The Real Me, Part 2

Charity. Patience. When naming a child after some abstract quality, most go for the virtues. Envy, the heroine of Temporary, must have had some weird parents. Trying to survive by working for a temp agency, Envy has had her share of strange supervisors. Assured that the next job will be a cakewalk, however, she agrees to catalog evidence files for the local police department. Wherein she meets detective Kaswalski, a good police officer with five distinct personalities. The story is a bit cliché and heavy handed—sort of a cross between *Reservoir Dogs* and *Sybil*—but it will appeal to anyone who's had to suffer with a shit job and an irrational boss. (DCE)

\$2.95, Damon Hurd and Rick Smith, OriginComics, 1430 Route 300, Ste. 2, Newburgh, NY 12550, www.origincomics.com

Unloveable #1-3

These yearly minis, supposedly based on the stumbled-upon mid-'80s diaries of a teenage girl the author found in a rest room during a road trip, chronicle the unhappy high-school existence of Tammy, a foul-smelling, self-conscious disaffected youth with few positive qualities. Her brother's a nutsack, her best friend a lying slut, and the only boy in school showing any interest in her is an overweight psychopathic stalker with glasses named Wayne. Tammy's trouble's don't end there, however, for at Watson's hands, the girl's drama is magnified, literally: Enlarged Pores, Plaque, Tongue Wart, Stretch Mark, Blackhead, Zit Scar, Whitehead, Fuzz, and Blood are drawn in excruciating, disgusting detail in one panel—the final image in a story in which Tammy discovers a thick, manly hair growing out of her chin. Tammy's depraved story is told with relish, delightfully and wickedly, in the style of Aline Kominsky Crumb's autobiographical tales. Yet Tammy's tale is a step removed from autobiography, and Watson exploits this difference between truth and falsehood with all she can muster. (AEM)

Esther Pearl Watson, funchicken@earthlink.net



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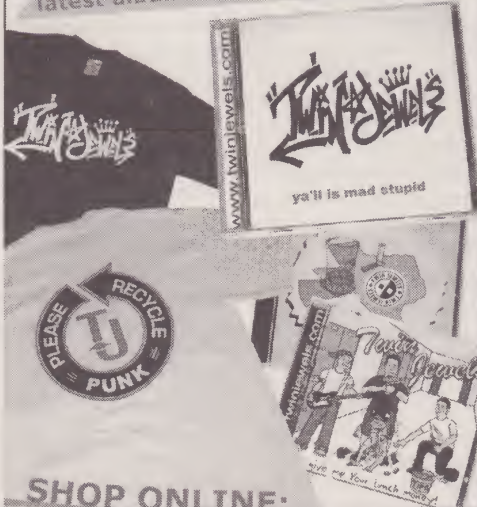
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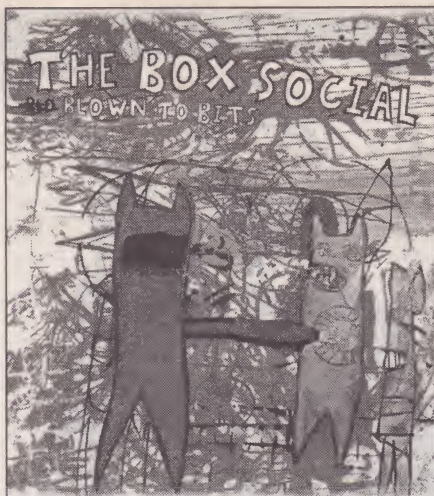
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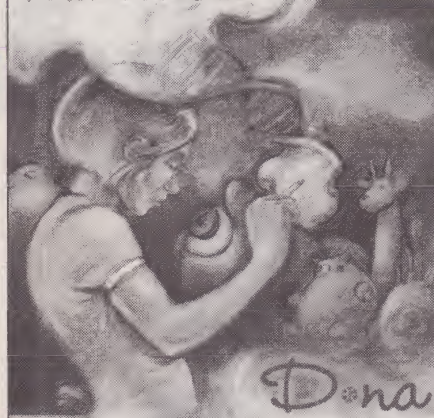
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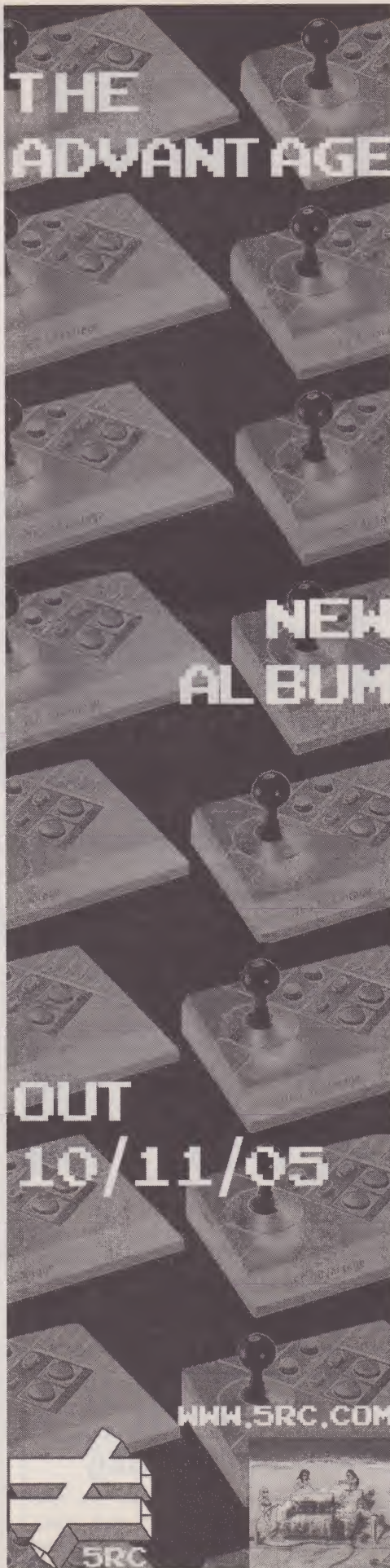
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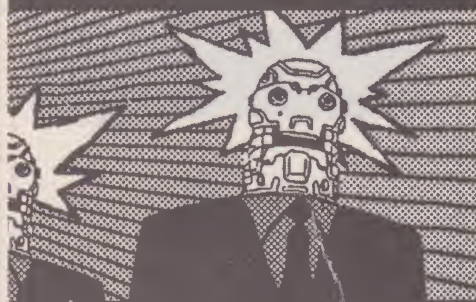
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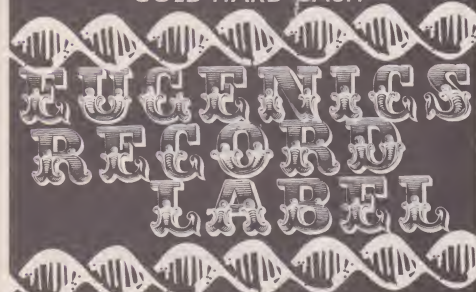
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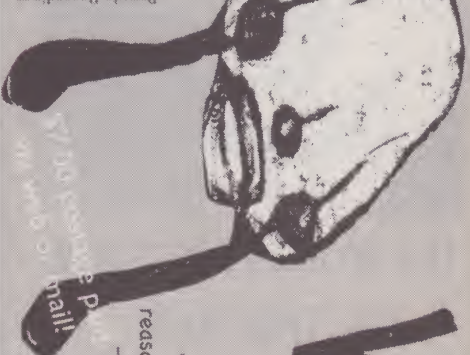
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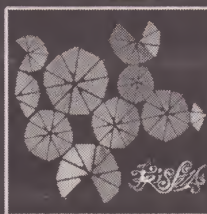
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Pelican

At Pelican's official site, you can sign up for email updates: Hydrahead.com/pelican/.

Dan Savage

Savage is the editor of Seattle, Washington's alternative newsweekly *the Stranger* (Thestranger.com) as well as the man behind the nationally syndicated sex-advice column Savage Love.

Action Terroriste Socialement Acceptable

Don't let their French Canadian environs fool you, Action Terroriste Socialement Acceptable will probably write you back in English: info@atsa.qc.ca.

The Dream is Dead

Thedreamisdead.com is the speediest and most computer-based method of keeping up with the band.

Marcel Dzama

Verlag Der Buchhandlung Walter Konig published *Marcel Dzama*; the Art Gallery of Windsor re-released *Drawings by Marcel Dzama in paperback*; and *Marcel Dzama: Welcome to Winnipeg* is available from Rizziero Arte. All of these can be found on Amazon.com. Check Mcsweeneys.net for Dzama's 826 for 826.

articles in this issue

Black Market

This short reading list will get you more info on guerilla marketing and contemporary PR:

Gladwell, Malcom. *The Tipping Point*. New York: Back Bay Books 2002.

Klein, Naomi. *No Logo*. New York: Picador 2000.

Moore, Anne Elizabeth. *Hey Kidz, Buy This Book*. New York: Soft Skull 2004.

Stauber, John and Sheldon Rampton. *Toxic Sludge is Good for You*. Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press 1995; and *Trust Us, We're Experts*. New York: Penguin Picador 2002.

Punks Give Gaelic a New Voice

Start your own Gaelic punk band! Harvard University, New York University, and the Universities of Ontario; Ohio; Arizona; Minnesota; and Wisconsin all offer courses in Gaelic language instruction.

It's Gettin' Drafty

The Selective Service System at Sss.gov will keep you updated on draft implementation plans.

Homebrewed Bytes

Get ready for the 2006 Mbit.gbadev.org compo by directing all your questions and fundraising ideas to: admin@gbadev.org.

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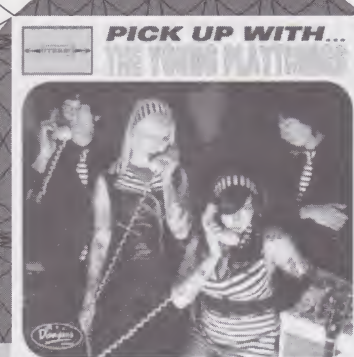
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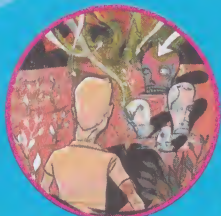
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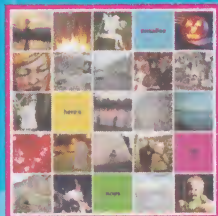
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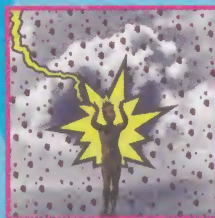
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 (LP on Obscurist Press.)*



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 also: "Bloodstains" LP/CD*



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*"Three Songs" 1-sided 12"
 (Three new songs!)*



GRABASS CHARLESTONS
*"Ask Mark Twain" LP/CD
 also: "Greatest Story" LP/CD*



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*"Ten Songs"
 LP/CD*



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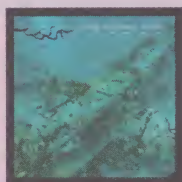
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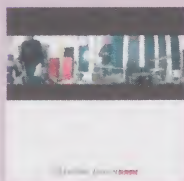
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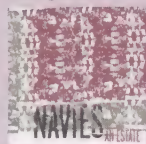


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